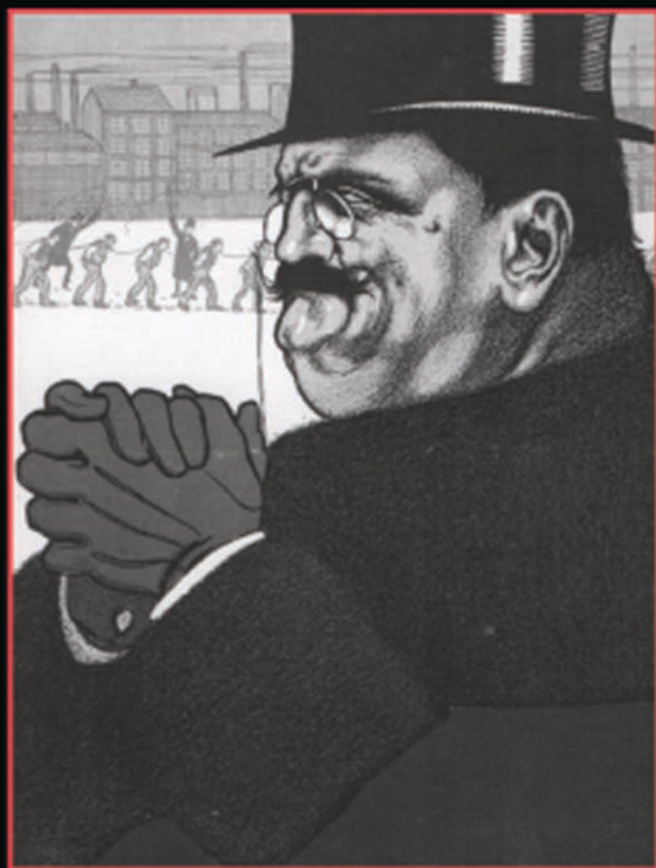


Marcel van der Linden

Transnational Labour History

Explorations



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Explorations

MARCEL VAN DER LINDEN

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Contents

<i>Studies in Labour History General Editor's Preface</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
1 Introduction	1
2 The First International (1864–1876): A Reinterpretation	11
3 The National Integration of European Working Classes (1871–1914): Exploring the Causal Configuration	23
4 The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism (1890–1940)	49
5 Second Thoughts on Revolutionary Syndicalism	71
6 Communist Parties: The First Generation (1918–1923)	85
7 Metamorphoses of European Social Democracy (1870–2000)	95
8 The Aftermath of '1968': Interactions of Workers', Youth and Women's Movements	117
9 Crossing the Borders of US–American Labour History	143
10 International Trade Unionism: A Long View	155
11 Doing Comparative Labour History: Some Preliminaries	173
12 How Normal is the 'Normal' Employment Relationship?	197
13 The Historical Limit of Workers' Protest	205
<i>Index</i>	217



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Studies in Labour History

General Editor's Preface

Labour history has often been a fertile area of history. Since the Second World War its best practitioners – such as E.P. Thompson and E.J. Hobsbawm, both Presidents of the British Society for the Study of Labour History – have written works which have provoked fruitful and wide-ranging debates and further research, and which have influenced not only social history but history generally. These historians, and many others, have helped to widen labour history beyond the study of organized labour to labour generally, sometimes to industrial relations in particular, and most frequently to society and culture in national and comparative dimensions

The assumptions and ideologies underpinning much of the older labour history have been challenged by feminist and later by postmodernist and anti-Marxist thinking. These challenges have often led to thoughtful reappraisals, perhaps intellectual equivalents of coming to terms with a new post-Cold War political landscape.

By the end of the twentieth century, labour history had emerged reinvigorated and positive from much introspection and external criticism. Very few would wish to confine its scope to the study of organized labour. Yet, equally, few would wish now to write the existence and influence of organized labour out of nations' histories, any more than they would wish to ignore working-class lives and focus only on the upper echelons.

This series of books provides reassessments of broad themes of labour history as well as some more detailed studies arising from recent research. Most books are single-authored but there are also volumes of essays centred on important themes or periods, arising from major conferences organized by the Society for the Study of Labour History. The series also includes studies of labour organizations, including international ones, as many of these are much in need of a modern reassessment.

Chris Wrigley
British Society for the Study of Labour History
University of Nottingham



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List of Tables and Figures

Tables

3.1	Per capita volume of industrial production, 1800–1913	27
3.2	Railroads in kilometres per million inhabitants, 1870–1911	29
3.3	Men entitled to vote as a percentage of male age group defined by electoral law, 1870–1913	32
3.4	Social Democratic/Labour votes as a percentage of the total electorate, 1871–1914	33
3.5	Military appropriations per capita of population, 1880–1914	36
3.6	Percentage of working population covered by social insurance, 1885–1915	37
3.7	Comparison of integration-promoting factors: Britain, Germany and France versus Italy and Russia	41
4.1	The rise and fall of syndicalist organizations	52
7.1	Average electoral results of European social democratic parties, 1920–99	96
8.1	Changes in gross national product, 1955–75	119
8.2	University students	120
8.3	Days lost in labour disputes (strikes and lock-outs) per 100 000 non-agricultural labourers, 1960–75	122
8.4	Trade union density rates, 1968–76	123
8.5	Immediate outcomes of police intervention in student protest events	125
8.6	The female labour force as a percentage of the total labour force	130
10.1	The founding years of some national trade union confederations	159
10.2	ICFTU affiliation fees by region, 1960–98	164

Figures

10.1	The logic of international trade union cooperation	160
11.1	Levels of comparison	177
11.2	The application of comparative methods	182
11.3	Method of Agreement	184
11.4	Method of Difference	184
11.5	Joint Method	185
11.6	Most Similar Systems Design	186

11.7	Most Different Systems Design	186
11.8	Hypothetical truth table showing three causes of successful strikes	187

List of Abbreviations

ADGB	Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AIFLD	American Institute for Free Labor Development
BWP	Belgische Werklieden Partij
CFDT	Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail
CFTC	Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens
CGC	Confédération Générale des Cadres
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana dei Lavoratori
CGL	Confederazione Generale de Lavoro
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail; Confederação Geral do Trabalho
CGT-FO	Confédération Générale du Travail-Force Ouvrière
CISL	Confederazione Italiana dei Sindacati Liberi
CNT	Confederación Nacional del Trabajo
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
FAUD	Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands
FGCI	Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana
FORA	Federación Obrera Regional Argentina
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFCTU	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
IISH	International Institute of Social History
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISNTUC	International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centres
ITS	International Trade Secretariat
IWMA	International Working Men's Association
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
KPÖ	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs
LO	Landsorganisationen
LSI	Labour and Socialist International
MLD	Movimento de Liberazione della Donna
NAS	Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat
NVV	Nederlandsch Verbond van Vakvereenigingen
OBU	One Big Union
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PdUP	Partito d'Unità Proletaria

PSI	Partito Socialista Italiana
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
RITU	Red International of Trade Unions (Profintern)
SAC	Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation
SDS	Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund
SFIO	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SPÖ	Sozialistische Partei Österreichs
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UDI	Unione delle Donne Italiane
UGT	Unión General de Trabajadores
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro
UNEF	Union Nationale des Etudiants Français
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USI	Unione Sindacale Italiana
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
WCL	World Confederation of Labour
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WMA	Working Men's Association

Acknowledgements

Chapter 2 was first published in 1988 as 'The Rise and Fall of the First International. An Interpretation', in Frits L. Van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830–1940*, Vol. I, Leiden: Brill, pp. 323–35.

Chapter 3 was first published in 1988 as 'The National Integration of European Working Classes, 1870–1914. Exploring the Causal Configuration', *International Review of Social History*, **33**, pp. 285–311.

Chapter 4 was jointly written with Wayne Thorpe and first published in 1990 as 'The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism', in Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds), *Revolutionary Syndicalism. An International Perspective*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, pp. 1–24. Other versions were published in German in 1990 (in 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, **5** (3), pp. 9–38); in Japanese in 1991 (in *Ohara Shakai Mondai Kenkyujo Zasshi*, **386**, pp. 15–36); in French in 1992 (in *Le Mouvement Social*, **159**, pp. 3–36); and twice in Spanish (in 1992 in *Historia Social*, **12**, pp. 3–29, and in 1999 in *Libre Pensamiento*, **29–30**, pp. 6–21).

Chapter 5 was first published in 1998 as 'Second Thoughts on Revolutionary Syndicalism', *Labour History Review*, **63** (2), pp. 182–96. Other versions appeared in Swedish in 1998 (in *Arbetsarhistoria*, **87–88**, pp. 4–11) and in German in 2001 (in 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, **16** (2), pp. 141–58).

Chapter 6 is an original contribution.

Chapter 7 was first published in 1998 as 'Metamorphoses of European Social Democracy', *Socialism and Democracy*, **12**, pp. 161–86. Earlier versions appeared in German in 1996 (in Wladislaw Hedeler, Mario Kessler and Gert Schäfer (eds), *Ausblicke auf das vergangene Jahrhundert. Die Politik der internationalen Arbeiterbewegung von 1900 bis 2000. Festschrift für Theodor Bergmann*, Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, pp. 210–28) and in Dutch in 1995 (in *Kritiek. Jaarboek voor socialistische discussie en analyse*, **4**, pp. 9–31).

Chapter 8 is an original contribution.

Chapter 9 is a part of 'Transnationalizing American Labor History', *Journal of American History*, **86**, (1999), pp. 1078–92.

An earlier version of Chapter 10 was published in 2000 as 'Conclusion: The Past and Future of International Trade Unionism', in Marcel van der Linden

(ed.), *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, Berne: Peter Lang Academic Publishers, pp. 519–40.

Chapter 11 was first published in Spanish in 1999 as ‘Hacer historia comparativa del trabajo: algunos preliminares esenciales’, *Historia Social*, **33**, pp. 111–31. A drastically shortened English version appeared in 1998 in Jim Hagan and Andrew Wells (eds), *Australian Labour and Regional Change. Essays in Honour of R.A. Gollan*, Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Halstead Press, pp. 75–92.

Chapter 12 was first published in 1999 as ‘Wie normal ist das Normal-arbeitsverhältnis?’, 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, **14** (1), pp. 7–18.

Chapter 13 was first published in 1997 as ‘The Historical Limit of Workers’ Protest: Moishe Postone, *Krisis* and the Commodity Logic’, *International Review of Social History*, **42**, pp. 447–58.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Labour history is a small discipline facing big challenges. At one time, several decades ago, labour historians in most countries knew fairly exactly what they were doing. They were studying the organized workers' movement, its leaders, actions and ideas. They knew which research methods they were supposed to use and had little doubt about the appropriate framework for interpretation. True, the dominant approaches varied from one country to the next, but almost everyone seemed to have his or her own 'synthesis'. They all had one thing in common: they focused on the institutional aspects of labour history, such as organizational structure, congresses, leaders, debates, strikes and elections. Classical labour history consisted of the application of the approaches, methods, formats and styles of the traditional historiography of ideas and politics to the field of labour history. In so far as it addressed 'social issues', it was an offshoot of economics and economic history; in so far as it discussed the movement itself and its organizations, leaders and ideas, it was an offshoot of political or intellectual history. The classical approach 'tended to produce both a model and an accepted version of history, both national and international, which ranged from an informal but not very flexible to a formal and highly inflexible orthodoxy'.¹

These old syntheses began to be undermined in the 1950s and 1960s – a process that continued with even greater force in the following decades. In Britain, Asa Briggs, Eric Hobsbawm, Edward Thompson and others tried to contextualize workers' struggles. As Hobsbawm wrote in 1964, these historians highlighted 'the working classes as such [...] and] the economic and technical conditions that allowed labour movements to be effective, or which prevented them from being effective'.² Similar trends became apparent somewhat later in other countries. In the United States, Ira Berlin, David Brody, Herbert Gutman and David Montgomery among others were pioneers. In France, followers of the *Annales* School, whose structural and serial historiography had largely left people out, had long opposed writers of 'event-centred' (*événementiel*) labour movement history. Especially after 1968 some *rapprochement* was apparent, although this was a slow process. Michelle Perrot felt impelled to remark in 1979, '[In French historiography] the study of the workers' movement has polarized historians for a long time and eclipsed other problems, such as the development of the working class and its culture. However, this is changing rapidly'.³ In Germany *Strukturgeschichte*, founded in the 1950s by Werner Conze and others, had incorporated some elements of National Socialist *Volksgeschichte*, including its focus on the 'structured totality' of the social 'order'. From the late 1960s onwards, Hans-Ulrich

Wehler, Jürgen Kocka and others modified and transformed it into a modern approach combining Weberian and Marxian elements.⁴

This second phase reached its peak during the 1970s, when former student activists began to write labour history theses and books. Their productivity was immense and impressive – perhaps there will never again be so much labour history written in so few years.⁵ But this peak period did not last long. Most importantly, the organizing categories of the second phase were increasingly called into doubt, partly because they contained continuities with the first phase. Often the teleology of the first phase had simply been reversed. While the ‘classic’ labour historians had been inspired by an optimistic perspective, celebrating the emergence of mass organization and stressing the dynamics of unity and organization, the new generation tended to ask what had gone wrong with the movement. From a methodological point of view an ‘epistemology of absence’ (in Margaret Somers’ words) became predominant. ‘Rather than seeking to explain the presence of radically varying dispositions and practices, [labour historians] have concentrated disproportionately on explaining the absence of an expected outcome, namely the emergence of a revolutionary class consciousness among the Western working class.’⁶

Ever since, many labour historians have viewed the state of their discipline as a protracted crisis. First, the emerging paradigms of women’s and ethnic history showed that there had been giant blank spots on labour history’s map, and that filling in these blanks made a complete rewriting of the old narratives unavoidable. Second, the unilinear conception of class-consciousness that had long been dominant came into question.

Once it was established that class was a construction and not a predetermined consequence of structural forces, then the notion that it could be seen as the product of an autonomous culture reacting to certain political and economic circumstances ultimately had to be rethought. Class and class action, it became apparent, could work in many different and contradictory ways.⁷

As a result of growing uncertainty about its organizing categories, labour history is beginning to lose its character as a ‘discipline’. On the one hand, the distinction between labour history and contiguous disciplines, such as women’s studies, ethnic studies, anthropology, institutional economics, sociology and social psychology, is beginning to dissolve. On the other hand, both conceptual difficulties and political disappointments have stimulated postmodern approaches.⁸

In North America and Western Europe, including Britain, debates among labour historians are thus dominated by a paradigmatic crisis – a crisis that has apparently not always greatly reduced the output of the ‘older generation’ of labour historians, as it happens, but has often led to diminished interest among students. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union the problems are even more serious. The collapse of so-called ‘socialism’ has led to the almost complete demise of classical labour historiography, since the latter is, with reason, perceived as an element of the old dictatorships;⁹ Communist regimes

generally used a distorted, 'official' history of their national workers' movements as part of their legitimating ideology.

At the same time, exciting new developments are taking place, especially in Asia. A group of Indian intellectuals had already published a series of very innovative collections of essays on the social history of 'subaltern' classes, focusing especially on peasants.¹⁰ Now a new generation of sophisticated Indian labour historians has emerged. In December 1996 this led to the foundation of the Association of Indian Labour Historians, which has already organized several successful conferences. This initiative was the first of its kind in Asia; but interest in working-class history is increasing in other countries of the continent as well (Pakistan, Indonesia and South Korea, for instance). In Latin America a real 'labour studies boom' has taken place in recent years.¹¹ Interest in working-class history has also been growing in a few African countries (such as South Africa and Nigeria), parallel with the emergence of large groups of new wage labourers. These new labour historians are grappling to some extent with the same conceptual questions as their colleagues in developed countries, but this is not hindering intense research activity on their part.

Also visible is another trend in labour history, beyond and linked to its uneven geographical development – the increasingly strongly felt need to work across national boundaries. The more we know about the history of the working classes, in more and more countries, the more tempting it is to place the various national developments in a broader context. Two basic reasons for this can be put forward.

In the first place, we can only discover what is specific and what is general in our own history by looking beyond national borders. Since the late nineteenth century scholars have tried better to understand national peculiarities through comparisons with other countries. One famous example was the German economist and historian Werner Sombart, who almost 100 years ago, inspired by the considerable difference in social democratic parties' popularity in Germany and the USA, asked the question, 'Why is there no socialism in the United States?'¹² Such attempts at comparison may be intended to highlight contrasts (what is 'normal' in one country is anything but normal in another), but they can also be more ambitious and used to explain national differences and similarities.

A second important reason for crossing national borders is that borders are not very relevant to the object of study. Working-class formation and restructuring are not neatly contained within particular national borders; they are processes on which voluntary and forced immigration and emigration have a great deal of influence. Dramatic developments in one country may cause turbulence in other countries; strike waves often have a transnational character; new forms of campaigning are imitated elsewhere; national labour movements communicate with each other, learn from each other and create international organizations.¹³

Since the 1970s the growing need for studies that look beyond national borders has resulted in a tremendous growth in the number of contributions to transnational labour history – that is, labour history that focuses on cross-

border processes and comparisons.¹⁴ The essays in this collection are part of this trend. In order to understand them better it may be useful for readers to know more about the institutional context in which they were written. Since late 1983 I have worked for the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam. This is the largest institutional archive in the world in the field of labour relations and social movements. The papers of radical intellectuals such as Mikhail Bakunin, Karl Marx and Emma Goldman are to be found there, together with the archives of organizations such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and Amnesty International, as well as very extensive materials on labour and social protest.¹⁵ During the first 50 years after the IISH's foundation in 1935, its staff's activities were above all (though never exclusively) directed at collecting, making accessible and managing archives of European origin.

From the 1980s onwards this began to change, in two respects. First, more attention was devoted over time to scholarly research. The IISH's archivists, curators and librarians increasingly worked alongside a growing number of historians writing books and articles on a broad range of topics in social history. Second, the IISH's original, overwhelmingly Eurocentric approach was replaced in the 1990s by a far broader approach. Not only were archives and materials built up relating to the Middle East, China and Central, South and South-east Asia, but its research projects, too, were much more broadly conceived. Contacts were made everywhere around the globe, and the IISH began systematically to organize scholarly workshops in other parts of the world.

Against this backdrop it was only to be expected that researchers at the IISH would turn to studying cross-border influences and transnational comparisons. In doing so they joined in the more general trends in social history described above. I was involved in all these changes, and their influence is accordingly visible in the essays assembled here. The texts brought together in this book deal with workers' movements and organizations, their interactions and varying national contexts.

The first contribution (and the one that came first for me personally) is a brief essay about the International Working Men's Association, 1864–1876 – later called the First International (Chapter 2). In the past, this organization's short lifespan has often been explained as the result of conflicts between prominent individuals (Marx and Bakunin) and of contingent events such as the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. Without denying the importance of such factors, I maintain in this essay that there was also a structural dimension. The First International can be seen as the organizational expression of a very specific historical conjuncture – namely, the transition from pre-national to national labour movements in Europe and North America.¹⁶

The 'nationalization' of European labour movements at the end of the nineteenth century is the subject of Chapter 3. Here, too, I argue that structural influences played an essential role in integrating working classes into nation-states. By comparing developments in five countries (Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia) in the period 1871–1914, I try to make the case that a cluster of interrelated factors can explain why integration was more

advanced in some countries than in others. Among these factors are national characteristics of the process of capital accumulation, interregional communication and transportation, national prestige, education, suffrage, military service, fiscal pressure, and social security provisions.¹⁷

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss a current in the labour movement that existed on several continents during the first decades of the twentieth century and tried to constitute a counterweight to processes of national integration – revolutionary syndicalism. Chapter 4 was originally written in the late 1980s as an introduction to a volume of essays on syndicalist movements in 12 countries edited by the Canadian historian Wayne Thorpe and myself.¹⁸ Starting from the observation that revolutionary syndicalism had its greatest worldwide impact in the half-century from roughly 1890 to the outbreak of the Second World War, Thorpe and I try to identify the structural factors that can explain this current's rise and fall. The text concludes with the proposition that changes in advanced capitalism and the rise of welfare states placed these movements before an unavoidable 'trilemma': dissolution, moderation or marginalization. Just as in the case of the First International, the structural manoeuvring room enjoyed by this kind of movement occupies a central place in this essay. Of course, concrete analyses of the development of particular movements will have to devote considerable attention to contingent factors as well.¹⁹

The text of Chapter 4 has been translated and reprinted a number of times. Because a substantial number of new studies on syndicalist movements appeared in the course of the 1990s, I thought it would be useful to reconsider our conclusions one more time. Chapter 5 offers a number of such 'second thoughts'. It qualifies a few of our earlier thoughts about the origins and success of syndicalist movements, and points to cultural aspects that were neglected for too long (including by me). I argue particularly, under the influence of recent Swedish and Australian studies, that notions of masculinity deserve more attention.

While revolutionary syndicalism exited the world stage for the last time in the 1940s, two other currents had a much more enduring influence on the labour movement – communism (which to some extent built on the earlier legacy of syndicalism) and social democracy. Chapter 6 highlights the wave of foundations of communist parties in the years from 1918 to 1923. By means of an international comparison, I try to clarify the specific historical constellation that contributed to these parties' success or failure in quickly gaining mass support. In Chapter 7, I examine the other main political current in twentieth-century labour movements. My intention in making a long-term comparison among different European social democracies since the 1870s is not only to show that developments took the same course everywhere – despite important divergences between Northern and Southern Europe – but also to make the case that these developments had a distinct logic.

Beginning in the second half of the 1960s, protest movements of young people and women challenged the established left-wing organizations. Chapter 8 focuses on the complex interactions between trade unions and the so-called 'new' social movements in Western Europe, within individual countries as well as among different countries. Cross-border interactions are also discussed in

Chapters 9 and 10. Chapter 9 is a short, programmatic statement in which I suggest ways in which US labour history could be reinterpreted from a transnational perspective. Chapter 10 sketches a number of major aspects of the development of trade-union internationalism, approximately from the period of Chapter 2 to the present.

Chapters 2 through 10 are all case studies, in which the possibilities of cross-border historiography are tried out and concepts such as 'working class' and 'labour movement' are still used in a quite unreflective way. The final three chapters have a more pronounced theoretical character, however. In these texts I tried to reach more clarity about the methods and concepts of transnational labour historiography. Chapter 11 tries to formulate a few methodological foundations for comparative labour history, based on the experience gathered through the IISH's projects and the extensive social-scientific literature available.²⁰ Among other things, I advocate more teamwork in research – something that historians are still often a bit nervous about – and a conscious application of a number of procedural rules.

The two final chapters raise questions about important, substantive notions in 'classical' labour history. Chapter 12 considers to what extent our concept of a 'normal employment relationship' is Eurocentric and thus in need of rethinking. Chapter 13, finally, contains some reflections about workers' protest in capitalist societies. Classical liberal and socialist interpretations see the working class as emancipating itself by either integrating itself into capitalism or overcoming capitalism. I argue, by contrast, that we need a critical synthesis of these two approaches, combining a radical analysis of capitalism with the insight that labour movements are integral and necessary components of that same capitalism.

The essays assembled in this book have in common a transnational approach to labour and working-class history, and thus attribute a central role to divergences, convergences and interactions among developments in different countries. This approach does *not* imply that it is no longer useful to study processes on a national, regional or local level. However, it *does* imply that investigations of clearly limited political-geographic entities (such as the United Kingdom or United States for example) can no longer be carried out as if these entities were self-contained monads. Spatially smaller objects of study can only be understood in a far larger framework. Inversely too, of course, studying global processes requires genuine insight into many subnational and national developments.

I see transnational labour history as the first approximation towards a truly global labour history, which would link up multipolar developments in various parts of the world and reconstruct them as expressions of major, underlying processes. The essays in this collection should be read in that light. We still have a long way to go, however. Transnational labour history is usually restricted to two or three countries. Samples this small have the great advantage that a single researcher can personally acquire an in-depth knowledge of all the cases and thus manage the work individually. But this type of self-imposed limitation also has a disadvantage: as long as we content ourselves with small samples, we will never arrive at integral labour histories of

major regions, let alone of global capitalism.²¹ We must therefore gradually try to enlarge our research to embrace larger samples. In this collection I have made a cautious effort in this direction. The first comparative essay included here (Chapter 3) compares five countries; some of the later ones compare twice or three times as many.

At the same time, I must note that the work presented in this collection, if measured against my ultimate objective, is still extraordinarily incomplete. In the first place, my essays are still rather one-sidedly focused on institutional aspects of labour movements. Hobsbawm's old question about the conditions that allowed labour movements to be effective, or which prevented them from being effective, is also always lurking in the background. But, as I explain in Chapter 9, in the long run transnational labour history cannot be restricted to that one aspect, important as it is. We will also have to give serious attention to, among other things, broader processes of class formation and decomposition, and cultural and symbolic practices.

A second shortcoming of the essays assembled here is linked to the first. As suggested in Chapter 12, we can only construct a global labour history if we are prepared to face the possibility that our discipline's core concepts are Eurocentric in character and thus not suitable for analysing many developments in Asia, Africa or Latin America. One of the most important and most exciting tasks of the years to come will be to investigate the extent to which categories such as 'working class' and 'free labour' will have to be reinterpreted. There are clear indications that we need a new synthesis of family history and labour history, and that hybrid social forms (like 'worker-peasant', 'unfree wage labourer' or 'self-employed worker') will have to play a more prominent role in our theorizing.²²

The essays in this collection are only first steps towards a distant goal. But inasmuch as I can judge, they are steps in the right direction. Further steps can follow.

Notes

- 1 Hobsbawm, Eric J. (1984), *Worlds of Labour. Further Studies in the History of Labour*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, p. 4.
- 2 Hobsbawm, Eric J. (1964), *Labouring Men. Studies in the History of Labour*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, p. vii.
- 3 Perrot, Michelle (1979), 'The Three Ages of Industrial Discipline in Nineteenth-Century France', in: Merriman, John M. (ed.), *Consciousness and Class Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, New York and London: Holmes and Meier, pp. 149–68 at p. 150.
- 4 Schulze, Winfried (1989), *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945*, Munich: Oldenbourg, esp. ch. 16.
- 5 See, for instance, the survey of specialized history courses and completed history dissertations at eight American universities, 1948/1958–78, in Darnton, Robert (1990), *The Kiss of Lamourette. Reflections in Cultural History*, New York and London: Norton, pp. 200, 202.
- 6 Somers, Margaret Ramsay (1989), 'Workers of the World, Compare!', *Contemporary Sociology*, 18, pp. 325–29 at p. 325.

- 7 Price, Richard (1991), 'The Future of British Labour History', *International Review of Social History*, **36**, pp. 249–60 at p. 253.
- 8 Gareth Stedman Jones, for instance, defended his 'linguistic turn' as a result of 'the gulf between the predictions of the Marxist explanatory model and the actual assumptions which appear to have guided the activities of [...] workers'. See Jones, Gareth Stedman (1983), *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History, 1832–1982*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 8.
- 9 In other subdisciplines, such as, for example, women's history, attention continues to be given, to an increasing extent, to the history of work.
- 10 *Subaltern Studies*, 9 vols, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982–1996.
- 11 French, John D. (2000), 'The Latin American Labor Studies Boom', *International Review of Social History*, **45**, pp. 279–308.
- 12 Sombart, Werner (1976), *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?*, trans. Patricia M. Hocking and C.T. Husbands, London: Macmillan; originally (1906), *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?*, Tübingen: Mohr.
- 13 See, for example, Van Holthoon, Frits L. and van der Linden, Marcel (eds) (1988), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830–1940*, 2 vols, Leiden: Brill; Wolikow, Serge and Cordillot, Michel (eds) (1993), *Prolétaires de tous les pays: unissez-vous? Les difficiles chemins de l'internationalisme, 1848–1956*, Dijon: EUD.
- 14 See my bibliographical efforts: 'Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830–1940: Fragments of a Bibliography', in Van Holthoon and van der Linden, *Internationalism*, Vol. II, pp. 624–54; (1998), 'A Bibliography of Comparative Labour History', in Jim Hagan and Andrew Wells (eds), *Australian Labour and Regional Change. Essays in Honour of R.A. Gollan*, Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Halstead, pp. 117–45; (2000), 'Thematic Bibliography', in Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, Berne: Peter Lang, pp. 581–604.
- 15 Information about the IISH and its collections can be found on its website: www.iisg.nl.
- 16 Julian P.W. Archer discusses this proposition in his major study (1997) on *The First International in France 1864–1872. Its Origins, Theories, and Impact*, Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 305–7. He comes to the conclusion that the collapse of the International in France was not the result of the 'broad, structural trends' that I had outlined but of more contingent factors. This does not contradict my overall argument. I am primarily concerned with the narrowing structural manoeuvring room for this type of organization in the period from the 1870s to the 1890s. Archer subscribes to this observation when he states:

Given the ever-increasing impact of the forces at work during the transitional phase, there was no hope that an International such as existed between 1864 and 1872 could be resurrected, and none ever has been. These forces (quite apart from other divisive forces already at work within the International) would have threatened the International in France if the organization had survived much longer, in which case I can envision it going through a protracted slide into extinction in the 1880s if it had continued another decade or more. (p. 307)

- 17 Patrick Pasture and Johan Verberckmoes are justified in calling the text of Chapter 3 'much-quoted' (see the introduction to their edited volume of 1998: *Working-Class Internationalism and the Appeal of National Identity. Historical Debates and Current Perspectives*, Oxford and New York: Berg, p. 8). But, so far as I know, it has never been seriously discussed until now.
- 18 An earlier version of this chapter was published as van der Linden, Marcel (1984), 'Vorläufiges zur vergleichenden Sozialgeschichte des Syndikalismus', in Heribert Baumann, Francis Bulhof and Gottfried Mergner (eds), *Anarchismus in Kunst und Politik. Zum 85. Geburtstag von Arthur Lehning*, Oldenburg: Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg, pp. 41–57.

- 19 Several authors have applied the trilemma in case studies: for example, Altena, Bert (1989), *'Een broeiest der anarchie'. Arbeiders, arbeidersbeweging en maatschappelijke ontwikkeling, Vlissingen 1875–1929 (1940)*, 2 vols, Haarlem: Thesis, Vol. 1, p. 418; Rübner, Hartmut (1994), *Freiheit und Brot. Die Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Anarchosyndikalismus*, Berlin and Cologne: Libertad, pp. 260–61.
- 20 Larry Griffin and I have made a more extensive case for further integration of social-scientific insights into social history in the introduction to our anthology (1998), *New Methods for Social History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 21 There is also the technical-methodological objection of overdetermination. On this point see Chapter 11.
- 22 My thoughts on this issue are still at a very early stage. See, as first explorations of this terrain, Amin, Shahid and van der Linden, Marcel (eds) (1996), *'Peripheral' Labour? Studies in the History of Partial Proletarianization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Brass, Tom and van der Linden, Marcel (eds) (1997), *Free and Unfree Labour. The Debate Continues*, Berne: Peter Lang; van der Linden, Marcel (1999), 'El fin del eurocentrismo y el futuro de la historia del trabajo: o por qué debemos y podemos reconceptualizar la clase obrera', in: Javier Paniagua, José A. Piqueras and Vicent Sanz (eds), *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo*, Valencia: UNED, pp. 301–22.



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Chapter 2

The First International (1864–1876): A Reinterpretation

The volume of empirical material on working-class internationalism produced over the last few decades is, no doubt impressive, even if several gaps are visible. Interestingly, alongside the considerable number of descriptive studies and source publications we find but a few attempts at theoretical interpretation and explanation. Such attempts as there are usually appear in the field of labour economics and political science; rarely are they the work of historians. In this context, the theories of Logue and Hildebrandt, *et al.*, come to mind.¹ This chapter seeks to apply the structural approach developed by these authors – albeit with some modifications and extensions – to nineteenth-century working-class internationalism in general and to the First International (International Working Men's Association) in particular. Whereas hitherto the rise and fall of this organization was usually, and to a large extent, accounted for in terms of contingent factors, and 'voluntarist' choices made by its leaders, here I wish to stress the more or less anonymous forces that played a role in this process. In doing so, I have to confine myself, in view of the scope of this chapter, to a relatively abstract discussion.

Three aspects of the major social and political changes of the nineteenth century closely bear on our subject: the 'advanced' economies, the nation-states engaged in these economies, and the labour movements in these states. Although the development of the various labour movements in particular may be deduced to a large extent from the development of the nation-states and economies, and the development of states, again, should partly be explained by the dynamics of the world market, it would seem that the three aspects should instead be dealt with as relatively independent trends, in order not to fall, from the outset, into reductionist simplification.

In the economic sphere, three interrelated elements are relevant; first, the tempestuous growth of international capitalism which appears, *inter alia*, from the quadruplication of industrial world production, and a sextuplication of the world trade between 1850 and 1890; second, the realization of integrated infrastructures in the various 'advanced' countries in North America and Western Europe revealed by the rapid improvement of transport and communication systems; and third, the unevenness of the growth leading to a situation in which Britain, after maintaining (around 1850) a very large lead in the industrial production, was outstripped by the USA, as well as by Germany, by c. 1900.

The formation of nation-states, already taking place for some centuries, was principally concentrated in the North American and West European regions

during this period. By and large, with a few exceptions such as Ireland and Catalonia, there was little doubt about the various national entities in these regions. Even in those cases where the formation of a nation-state was somewhat arrested – for example, in Italy and Germany – there was no question that clearly distinct nationalities were involved. The mere fact that the national borders of the various West European states have hardly changed at all since those days – at least not under pressure of national movements – indicates the consolidation of this process. Eastern Europe, of course, presented a very different picture. Here, multinational monarchies dominated the scene, and the formation of nation-states had made considerably less headway.

By the process of state formation and the progressive growth of national infrastructures, the nascent labour movements were increasingly forced to transform into national organizations. The reasons for this were twofold: on the one hand, an improved transport and communications network led to a heightened mobility of labour power and capital and, in its wake, a weakening of unions solely organized at a local level; on the other hand, the increased power of the employers made it essential for the trade unions to adopt a more forceful attitude which, for them, also implied acting in a wider context. As, from the international perspective, state formation and economic growth advanced in an uneven and combined manner, the labour movement's 'nationalization' experienced a similar process. The rise of national labour unions shows that, as one might expect, Britain got away to an earlier start than other countries. After the TUC had been founded in 1868 it took quite a number of years before comparable organizations were established in other countries. Among other, more permanent unions, the Canadian Labour Union Congress (1883) was relatively early. In the USA the National Union of Labor (1860–66) and the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 with a peak in membership in 1886, failed to become more permanently established, although the AFL (American Federation of Labor) founded in 1886, did succeed. In Spain the UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores) was founded in 1888, and in 1910 the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) followed. The German General Commission of Trade Unions made its first appearance in 1890. In the Netherlands the federalist NAS (Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat) was founded in 1893, and 13 years later the Social Democrat NVV. In 1898 the Belgian Syndicalist Commission of the BWP was founded, as well as the Danish and Swedish labour organizations.

Viewed against this backdrop we may divide the history of the nineteenth-century international labour movement into three phases:

- 1 a pre-national phase, until the end of the 1860s
- 2 a transitional phase, from the end of the 1860s until about 1900
- 3 the national phase, from the turn of the century onwards.

Here, I will only discuss the first two phases.

In the pre-national phase, the geography of workers' internationalism was determined by the long-term trends traced above in two ways. First, during this

period, internationalism always had its political and organizational backbone in Britain, particularly in London, where the 'Fraternal democrats', the 'International Association' and, of course, the First International were founded. The cause of this phenomenon must be sought in the economic climate of the time. During the entire pre-national phase Britain commanded a dominating position on the world market, although it gradually weakened somewhat. As a result, there was relatively little xenophobia in Britain. On the contrary, free migration, in fact, was the natural counterpart of free trade and was consequently actively supported. Thus, the 1843 *Report from the Select Committee on the Laws Affecting Aliens* stated

... that it is desirable for every people to encourage the settlement of foreigners among them, since by such means they will be practically instructed in what it most concerns them to know, and enabled to avail themselves of whatever foreign sagacity, ingenuity, or experience may have produced in art and science which is most perfect.²

Nor did the British workers usually see the immigration of foreign labour as a threat; the latter were few in number and they did not enter the country as cheap labour: 'Many of them worked at very specialist occupations which were their acknowledged preserves, and so competed with scarcely anyone The rest could be absorbed easily and unobtrusively into the British labour force.'³ For their part, Continental working men who, for instance, wished to leave their country on political grounds, were attracted to the relatively tolerant Britain of the time.

Another effect of Britain's power was the fact that, in a sense, London became the capital of the world. And if one can say that the workers of the capitals in this earth consider themselves to be 'heir to the scepter of the kings who have reared the city',⁴ the London workers may be expected to embody a certain hegemonic impulse on a world scale.

It may be imagined how the social and political conditions in London made it possible for a kind of subculture to arise in which working men of various nationalities communicated with each other and how they developed a deeply-rooted awareness of international relations and the necessity of international solidarity.

Second, during this period the concept of internationalism, as Kořalka observes, was 'rooted exclusively in the historical context of the West European countries, all of which at this time were national states, or, at least, integrated national societies'.⁵ The West European working-class internationalists made a stand against the social forces that, *after* the realization of a national cohesion, attempted to absolutize this existence in a reactionary sense. Here, the notion of 'internationalism' served as an 'asymmetric counter-notion', as defined by Koselleck, to this particular notion of 'nationalism': 'us', the internationalists, are opposed to 'them', the nationalists, with the full implication of mutually negative judgement.⁶ Of course, this kind of anti-nationalism did not preclude solidarity with the independence movements in Italy or Eastern Europe.

One of the first written expressions of workers' internationalism was a document endorsed by William Lovett's Working Men's Association (WMA) on 1 November 1836. In this document, called *Address to the Belgian Working Classes*, the WMA expressed the conviction 'that our interests – nay, the interests of working men in all countries of the world – are identified'. The Belgian 'brethren' were advised 'to form, if possible, a union with countries around you', because 'a federation of the working classes of Belgium, Holland and the Provinces of the Rhine would form an admirable democracy.'⁷

Soon after, organizations were founded that did not only promote internationalist thinking, but were also composed on an international footing – among others, the 'Fraternal Democrats' and the 'Communistische Arbeiter-Bildungs-Verein' (Communist Association for the Education of Working Men), the latter counting many non-Germans among its members. All these organizations shared a number of characteristics. They were comparatively small, with at the most a few hundred members; they were especially active in London, although not exclusively so; their membership consisted of highly skilled workers and artisans; and their objectives were chiefly in the field of education and information. The internationalism of these organizations was essentially theoretical, or perhaps rather ideological, in nature, and in practice it was expressed above all in protestations of solidarity and demonstrations in support of the 'brethren' in other countries, or of nationalities engaged in the struggle for independence.

In these small organizations a variety of influences apparently ran together: namely, the British workers' sense of solidarity with foreign refugees; the artisan contacts arising from the world of the *compagnonnages*, which, by the way, were probably more firmly rooted in artisan experience on the Continent than in the relationship between the Continent and Britain;⁸ the contacts arising from emigration, especially to the United States; and perhaps also some masonic traditions.

Founded in 1864, the First International on the one hand embodied a continuity of these earlier organizations and, on the other, represented a break with the past. The continuity consisted of its explicit ideological internationalist aspect, but the break with the past was revealed in its organization: the new Association had Chapters in various nation-states on the Continent, in the United States and even in Latin America, and did not limit its activities to education and propaganda, but stressed the practical promotion of workers' solidarity. With regard to the latter aspect, emphasis was put on two activities: the financial support of allied organizations and the restriction of international labour mobility. It seems that other possible forms of solidarity – for example, preventing the import of certain commodities – did not figure prominently until the end of the nineteenth century.

As the First International, unlike its predecessors, no longer constituted a predominantly political and propagandistic organization, but was to a high degree also an economic one, its rise and further development was much more tied up with economic conditions and the fate of trade unions in the countries concerned. In addition, importance must also be attached, of course, to the structural long-term trends in the economical and political sphere.

It seems that, in view of the social composition of its affiliated organizations, the rise of the First International cannot be explained on the grounds of the rise of the factory system. It is more likely that the technical and economic development of artisanal production partly created the conditions for the ascent of the new organization. This development not only brought about the decline of the artisan, as it caused a diminishment of skill requirements, overcrowded trades, and so on; it also interfered with the artisan's job control in terms of control over the pace of work, breaks, working methods and so on. Unfortunately, hardly any relevant research has been carried out on this aspect of the factors contributing to the rise of the First International.

The period after 1848 showed a certain measure of international synchronization of economic cycles, probably for the first time since the development of the world trade system began. After the boom of 1850–57 the expansion of world trade was briefly interrupted by what has been called 'probably the first world slump of the modern type',⁹ which led to a change in the political climate of the time. Whereas the defeat of 1848–49 still dominated the period of the boom, the crisis of 1857–58 and the subsequent period of recovery brought about a revival of political activity. On the one hand, the problems faced by skilled workers in various industrializing countries had much in common; on the other hand, however, labour organizations and labour forces varied considerably. From 1850 onwards, most countries in Western Europe experienced a wave of technological innovation, even if the intensity and speed of introducing these innovations varied for the various industrial lines and regions. The sewing machine, for instance, invented in the USA in 1845 and introduced at the World Exhibition in London in 1851, made rapid inroads into the clothing industry – an industry which, for some time, had been disturbed by the rise of ready-made clothing. After the machine had been adapted in the early 1850s for use in shoe manufacturing, it was rapidly taken up by that industry thereby increasing production but, at the same time, causing a fall in demand for formerly required skills. In *Capital*, Marx summed up the effect of this process:

The decisively revolutionary machine, the machine which attacks in an equal degree all the innumerable branches of this sphere of production, such as dressmaking, tailoring, shoemaking, sewing, hat-making, and so-on, is the sewing-machine. Its immediate effect on the workers is like that of all machinery, which, during the epoch of large-scale industry, has seized on new branches of trade. Children who are too young are removed. The wage of those who work with machines rises compared with that of the domestic workers, many of whom belong among the 'poorest of the poor'. The wage of the better situated handicraftsmen sinks, however, since the machine is in competition with them. The new machine-minders are exclusively girls and young women. With the help of mechanical force, they destroy the monopoly that male labour had of the heavier work¹⁰

Similar developments were, for example, visible in the building trades (the introduction of woodworking machines, automatic lock-making, mechanized methods of brick-making, and so on).

Not surprisingly, these changes fired sharp protests. The outstanding example, of course, was the strike and lock-out of London building workers in 1859–60. According to later views they principally fought for shorter working hours, the nine-hour day, but in fact they primarily wanted to retain some form of job control. Complaints expressed during the conflict were sufficiently indicative of the issue:

The applying of machinery to all the pursuits of human industry has, to a great extent, rendered the demand for manual labour unnecessary. In our own particular trade it already rips the material, ploughs, mortises, and tenons, and does everything except the bare putting together.¹¹

Despite significant national differences, the technical and economical trends, and the corresponding resistance, became apparent in all industrializing countries. Yet the specific conditions and the forms of resistance varied between countries.

In Britain, the most advanced capitalist country, the skilled workers' movement was better organized than it was on the Continent or in the USA. Although it is very difficult to obtain reliable data, we may assume that the average wage of skilled labour in Britain was higher than it was on the Continent, not only owing to the high level of labour organization, but also on account of the rule that 'the more advanced a country is economically, the higher-priced will be its indigenous labour force'.¹²

As a result of the relatively favourable position of the labour force during the 1850s and 1860s, British employers attempted to counteract labour conflicts by importing strike-breakers from abroad. During the Wolverhampton tinplate workers' strike in 1850 German and French strike-breakers were attracted to Britain. In 1859 a strike by the London gasworkers was broken by the introduction of German sugar bakers 'who as men accustomed to intense heat could be made available'.¹³ During the London building strike and lock-out in the same year probably no foreign labour was brought in, but threats to that effect were heard.

In general, we may assume that, to the British workers, such developments provided the principal reason for founding an international labour organization, but the historical conjuncture of this objective is often overlooked. On the one hand, the union movement was strong enough to force employers to introduce foreign labour in order to win conflicts; on the other hand, the union movement was not strong enough effectively to counter the employers' tactics under its own steam. The transitional nature of this situation carries the outcome. As soon as the British trade unions became *nationally* strong enough to rule independently the admission of individual trade groups to the labour exchange, the necessity for an organization that regulated the labour market internationally would disappear.

But at the beginning of the 1860s this was not as yet the case. The well-known address 'To the workmen of France from the working men of England', published in the *Beehive* of 5 December 1863, summarized the issues of the time:

A fraternity of peoples is highly necessary for the cause of labour, for we find that whenever we attempt to better our social condition by reducing the hours of toil, or by raising the price of labour, our employers threaten us with bringing over Frenchmen, Germans, Belgians, and others to do our work at a reduced rate of wages; and we are sorry to say that this has been done, though not from any desire on the part of our continental brethren to injure us, but through a want of regular and systematic communication between the industrious classes of all countries, which we hope to see speedily effected, as our principle is to bring up the wages of the ill-paid to as near a level as possible with that of those who are better remunerated, and not to allow our employers to play us off one against the other, and so drag us down to the lowest possible condition, suitable to their avaricious bargaining.

As it is, the issue was typically one that applied to the situation in Britain. This is demonstrated implicitly, but nonetheless poignantly, by the fact that the French reply to the address, read by Tolain at the foundation meeting of the First International in September 1864, did not mention the issue at all. Following fully the tradition of thinking in terms of workers co-operative societies, emphasis was laid on the subversion of the independent artisan by high finance:

... we see the future aristocracy seizing control of the smallest savings; ... they excel, by a thousand ingenious means, in taking from the workman the handling of his small capital, instead of stimulating his own spirit of initiative. ... [The] division of labour tends to make of each workman a machine in the hands of the high lords of industry.¹⁴

In France, as elsewhere on the Continent, the consolidation of a developing union movement was not the issue that it was in Britain. Emphasis was laid on the most elementary struggle of interests, which *precedes* the development of well-organized trade unions. Extraordinary regional fragmentation and an almost entire absence of recognized and legally protected union rights contributed to a rapid politicization of labour conflict.

This process is linked to the fact that the nature of solidarity action organized on the Continent by the International deviated from the kind of action practised in Britain. From the minutes of the General Council it appears that, on the Continent, financial solidarity was the important issue, as evidenced, from 1867, in the cases of the Parisian bronzeworkers, the building workers in Geneva and the silk-spinners in Lyons. In Britain the main issue was the regulation of labour supply as shown by the intervention in favour of London turners, and tailors in Edinburgh, Manchester and London. Of course, there was no absolute contrast. British workers, too, could do with financial support when they were engaged in industrial conflict with the employers and conversely, as the power of trade unions on the Continent gradually increased, they too realized the importance of such issues as labour supply.

From around 1870 three medium-range developments threatening the existence of the First International arose. First, in various countries the consolidation of trade unions continued. In this respect, Britain was way ahead. Not only did the trade unions keep growing, they also changed. Beginning with the foundation of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in

1851 amalgamated unionism pressed onwards. Between 1858 and 1867, in the leading industrial cities – Glasgow, Sheffield, Liverpool, Edinburgh and in London – permanent Trade Councils were established which led to the foundation of the TUC in 1868. Almost at the same time, and in the framework of the societal incorporation of the working class, the labour movement obtained some form of state recognition. In 1867 the Reform Act extended the franchise. In 1871 the Trade Union Act came into force, which improved the legal status of the unions. In 1876 an Amending Act followed. The outcome of these events proved to be even more detrimental to an active British interest in the International, which by about 1870 was no longer that enthusiastic.¹⁵ Earlier we saw that in the 1880s and 1890s a similar trend towards consolidation emerged in other European and North American countries.

Second, the economic climate of the period had an effect. The period between 1870 and the mid-1890s cannot simply be described as the period of the Great Depression. Yet it must be accepted that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century a gap appeared in the development of the British economy. In addition, the German and American economies were in severe crisis, and the French economy of the 1880s was in serious trouble. It seems, therefore, that we may justifiably consider the period between 1873 and about 1895 to be a period when a retarded economic growth, stagnation, and recession joined in a complex alliance. The economic slowdown was accompanied by a change in the collective state of mind. Rosenberg – speaking of this process in Central Europe – summarized it in the thesis that the centre of gravity of political agitation shifted from issues of political policies to a crude emphasis on economic objectives: instead of controversies on ‘big’ political issues (freedom, constitutional reconstruction and so on) the struggle for economic security became the focus of political discord.¹⁶ It is fair to assume that such shifts in attitude and perception do occur in times of deteriorating economic conditions since it is known that, at such times, the ‘espace social’ (Merleau-Ponty) to reflect upon long-term planning or somewhat abstract projects diminishes while issues pertaining to the provision of everyday livelihood will gain added significance.

Third, after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 the working classes entered into a closer relationship with the nation-states. Hobsbawm, *inter alia*, has pointed out that the intrusion of a nationalist and chauvinist attitude into ever-expanding social strata was, to a large extent, the result of a conscious policy – expressed in primary education, military service, public ceremonies, mass production of public monuments and so on¹⁷ – which, of course, corresponded to certain desires of the working classes.

In view of the combined forces which these structural tendencies could exert, the First International’s chances of survival were, at the outset, extremely small. Hence, it seems profitable to re-evaluate two events considered by traditional narrative historiography to be essential for the development of the International. For a start, there is the fall of the Paris Commune which, as Braunthal correctly remarked, did not destroy the International at all.¹⁸ The massacre perpetrated by Thiers was indeed a significant event that crushed the

French labour movement, but it did not mean the end of other branches of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA).

In addition, there was the famous conflict between Marx and Bakunin. The influence of these two intellectuals seems to have been overestimated. The effects of their controversy are only understandable if they are viewed in the context of those aspects of the International which were also essential to its existence in other ways – namely, in the fragmentation and extremely poor centralization of the affiliated trade unions, co-operative societies and educational associations. Moreover, the leadership of the IWMA was relatively isolated from its rank and file.

In the transitional phase between 1870 and 1900 we thus see a decline of the possibilities for an effective old-style working-class internationalism. Nevertheless, the uneven and combined development of the world market occasionally allowed for internationalism. Two instances may serve as indicators of its effect.

First, until the early 1880s the *Fédération Jurassienne* played a prominent role in the anarchist ranks. The *Fédération's* activities must be seen in the light of the international position of the Swiss watchmakers at the time, threatened as they were by the technological advances made in the USA in terms of the manufacture of standard interchangeable parts, which gave the American manufacturers a competitive edge. The effect – in combination with some other factors – was a strengthening of the radical attitude of Swiss watchmakers, leading to a form of pre-syndicalism in the *Fédération*. Although the events did not result in any sort of practical international union action, the situation had some side-effect in the form of an increased 'political' internationalism among the artisans concerned. In a sense, the problem of the Swiss watchmakers was solved along capitalist lines, when the Swiss manufacturers, despite losing some of their supremacy to the Americans, adapted by adopting some of the American production methods, enabling themselves to fairly rapidly re-consolidate their weakened position.¹⁹

Second, in the 1880s, when the American window glassworkers, associated with the Knights of Labor, saw how their labour monopoly was being threatened by the import of English, French and Belgian glassworkers, they successfully organized assemblies in Europe. In 1884 the International Glass Workers' Association was founded. Working according to the old model of the British trade unions in the 1860s, they seem to have been in a position, if only for a brief period, to regulate the import of foreign workers in the USA.²⁰

Notes

- 1 Logue, John (1980), *Toward a Theory of Trade Union Internationalism*, Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg; Hildebrandt, Eckart, Olle, Werner and Schoeller, Wolfgang (1976), 'National unterschiedliche Produktionsbedingungen als Schranke einer gewerkschaftlichen Internationalisierung', *Prokla*, 24, pp. 27–57, esp. pp. 30–39.
- 2 Quoted in Porter, Bernhard (1979), *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 5.

- 3 Ibid. See also Weisser, Henry (1975), *British Working-Class Movements and Europe 1815–48*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 167–68: foreign workers were to be considered ‘fellow sufferers, not responsible for the competition of cheap foreign goods’; at worst ‘they might be considered impersonally in economic calculations’.
- 4 Kiernan, Victor (1972), ‘Victorian London: Unending Purgatory’, *New Left Review*, 76, November–December, pp. 73–90, here at p. 81.
- 5 Kořalka, Jiří (1966), ‘Some Remarks on the Concepts of Nationalism and Internationalism’, *Historica*, 13, pp. 209–16, here at p. 215.
- 6 Koselleck, Reinhart (1979), ‘Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe’, in idem, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 211–59, at pp. 211–12. It should be noted that, in order to perform the function of ‘asymmetric counter-notion’ the idea of ‘internationalism’ must have some characteristics in common with the idea of ‘nationalism’. Benedict Anderson (1983), *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, pp. 15–16, defined the ‘nation’ as an imagined community. It is imagined because the individual members of the nation can never personally know each other, yet ‘in the mind of each lives the image of their communion’. By the same token, the nation is a community, because it is conceived of as a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’. ‘Internationalism’ in the pre-national labour movement takes its starting point from precisely the same idea of an imagined community – namely, the universal working class. Its emotional content is documented by the use of terms such as ‘brothers’, ‘brethren’, ‘Brüder’ or ‘frères’. Concerning this language of ‘brotherhood’, Tönnies has pointed out how, in communities, the members think of their relationships in terms of consanguineal ties. The relation in terms of ‘brothers’ or ‘sisters’ prevails over the ‘husband–wife’ relationship, because the former is supposed to express ‘the equality of essence and powers’ despite individual differences. See Tönnies, Ferdinand (1887), *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empirischer Culturformen*, Leipzig: Fues, pp. 9–12. More extensively on the socialist notion of ‘brotherhood’, see Bartholmes, Herbert (1970), *Bruder, Bürger, Freund, Genosse und andere Wörter der sozialistischen Terminologie*, Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, pp. 81–93.
- 7 The address is in Lehning, Arthur (1970), *From Buonarroti to Bakunin. Studies in International Socialism*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 210–14. Lehning also gives the corresponding ‘Réponse des ouvriers belges à l’adresse des ouvriers anglais’, pp. 214–18.
- 8 For the relation between *compagnonnage* and internationalism, see Logue, John (1983), “‘Da blev jeg svend og så tog jeg på valsen’”. Svendevandring og internationalisme i fagbevægelsens barndom’, *Meddelelser om Forskning i Arbejderbevaegelsens Historie*, 20, pp. 3–24. A description of routes can be found in Logue’s article, in: Barret, Pierre and Gurgand, Jean-Noel (1980), *Ils voyageaient la France. Vie et traditions des Compagnons du Tour de France au XIXe siècle*, Paris: Hachette, pp. 41–60, and in Schieder, Wolfgang (1963), *Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Die Auslandsvereine nach der Julirevolution von 1830*, Stuttgart: Klett, pp. 93–110. From these accounts one gains the impression that a move from the Continent to Britain rarely happened. The opposite route – that is, British artisans moving to the Continent, – seems to have been equally rare.
- 9 Hobsbawm, Eric (1975), *The Age of Capital, 1848–1875*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 85.
- 10 Marx, Karl (1976), *Capital*, vol. I, trans. Ben Fowkes, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 601.
- 11 Cited in Shaw Lefevre, G. and Bennet, Thomas R. (1860), ‘Account of the Strike and Lock-Out in the Building Trades of London, in 1859–60’, in *Trades’ Societies and Strikes. Report of the Committee on Trades’ Societies*, London, pp. 53–76 at p. 72.

- 12 Bonacich, Edna (1979), 'The Past, Present and Future of Split Labor Market Theory', *Research in Race and Ethnic Relations*, 1, pp. 17–64, at p. 21.
- 13 *Leader*, 6 August 1859. See also Collins, Henry (1968), 'The International and the British Labour Movement: Origin of the International in England', in *La Première Internationale. L'Institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*, Paris: CNRS, pp. 23–40 at pp. 26–27.
- 14 *Beehive*, 1 October 1864. The original French text is in Rjazanov, David (1926), 'Zur Geschichte der Ersten Internationale', in *Marx-Engels-Archiv*, vol. I, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 119–202, at pp. 195–96.
- 15 'The membership of affiliated British trade unions never reached more than about 50 000, possibly less, out of a total trade-union membership at the time of perhaps 800 000. The unions which joined, such as the bricklayers, tailors, shoemakers, cabinetmakers etc., were mostly in declining or vulnerable handicraft trades, mainly in London . . . Nor were these very assiduous in attendance or payment of subscriptions. Interest soon dwindled and affiliations ceased'. Musson, A.E. (1972), *British Trade Unions, 1800–1875*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 58.
- 16 Rosenberg, Hans (1967), *Grosse Depression und Bismarckzeit. Wirtschaftsablauf, Gesellschaft und Politik in Mitteleuropa*, Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 118–68.
- 17 See, for example, Hobsbawm, Eric (1983), 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914', in Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 263–307, or Weber, Eugen (1976), *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- 18 Braunthal, Julius (1961), *Geschichte der Internationale*, vol. I, Hannover: Dietz, p. 178.
- 19 Church, R.A. (1975), 'Nineteenth-Century Clock Technology in Britain, the United States, and Switzerland', *Economic History Review*, 28, pp. 616–30; Landes, David S. (1979), 'Watchmaking: A Case Study in Enterprise and Change', *Business History Review*, 13, pp. 1–39. The best structural analysis of Swiss anarchism is still to be found in Brupbacher, Fritz (1913), *Marx und Bakunin, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation*, Munich: Birk & Co., pp. 51–54, 57–62. But see also Vuilleumier, Mario (1988), *Horlogers de l'anarchisme. Emergence d'un mouvement. La Fédération Jurassienne*, Lausanne: Payot.
- 20 Ware, Norman J. (1929), *The Labor Movement in the United States 1860–1895*, New York and London: D. Appleton and Co., pp. 191–200; Pelling, Henry (1956), 'The Knights of Labor in Britain, 1880–1901', *Economic History Review*, 9, pp. 313–31; Watillon, Léon (1959), *The Knights of Labor in Belgium*, trans. Frederic Meyers, Los Angeles: Institute of Industrial Relations. In France, it seems, the Knights of Labor did not obtain a foothold until 1893. See, Dommanget, Maurice (1967), *La Chevalerie du Travail Française*, Lausanne: Rencontre.



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Chapter 3

The National Integration of European Working Classes (1871–1914): Exploring the Causal Configuration*

Introduction

Much has been written about the diverging responses of European working-class leaders to the outbreak of the First World War. We have a detailed knowledge of how German, French and British socialists willingly participated in the military efforts of their governments, how in Russia the delegates of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks left the Duma under protest when they were informed that their country had joined the conflict, and how the Italian party paper *Avanti!* applauded the behaviour of the Russian comrades.

This was not the only occasion on which parts of the European Left responded differently to political structures and developments. The German SPD, for instance, consciously renounced party agitation in the army. August Bebel, in a *Reichstag* speech in 1898, even said that he would dissociate himself from every party member campaigning in the army.¹ On the other hand, the Russian Mensheviks and Bolsheviks campaigned quite energetically among the tsarist troops.² The revolutionary syndicalist CGT was active in the French army, but its famous initiatives, like the *Sous du Soldat*, had no subversive aims at all.³

In colonial matters the German, French and British workers' parties adopted a 'moderate' attitude. But the Italian Socialist Party – despite its discord and drifting policies – declared a general strike when the Libyan war was initiated.

The information available about working-class organizations in the decades before the First World War makes it possible to envisage a continuum with two extremes: identification and non-identification with the nation-state. The German and British workers' parties are relatively near to the one pole, and the Russians near to the other. The French and Italian parties can be situated in between, the first close to the German/British side and the second close to the Russian side.

It is difficult to say with any accuracy to what degree the behaviour of party leaders reflected the opinion of the rank-and-file of their organizations and of

* The first version of this chapter was presented at the conference 'L'internationalisme et la guerre: le partage de 1914', Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, 17 and 18 December 1987. The chapter has benefited from the comments of René Gallissot, János Jemnitz, Andrea Panaccione, Robert Paris, Leo van Rossum and Marc Vuilleumier.

the working classes as a whole. Despite the scarcity of historical work on this question we may suppose that the attitudes of the rank-and-file did not always correspond to the attitudes of the leaderships. Certainly, the Italian 'general strike' of 1911 was not a complete success. And the intransigence of the Russian socialists presented a significant contrast to the enthusiasm for war demonstrated by many workers in Petrograd. The sudden patriotism of the SPD leadership in 1914, on the other hand, met with anti-militarist protests in Württemberg, Berlin and elsewhere.

In this chapter I want to reflect upon the (non)integration of the British, German, French, Italian and Russian working classes in general during the period 1871–1914. Because there is almost no direct access to workers' consciousness in those years (for example, through interviews with contemporaries) we have to use indirect methods. Two approaches can be discerned.

The first and obvious approach uses the material produced by workers and their organizations themselves (voting behaviour, party membership, trade-union membership, strike behaviour, reading behaviour, songs). The correct interpretation of this material is extremely difficult,⁴ but nevertheless has had some significant success.

The second approach analyses the dominating structures and ruling institutions which (could) have contributed to the integration of the working classes. This approach links up with integration theories in sociology and political science. Departing from the development of societies as wholes it should be possible to present hypotheses about the (non)integration of working classes. This second approach might supplement the first and result in a better understanding of the relationship between party leaderships and classes. In this chapter I want to explore some of its possibilities.

Karl W. Deutsch once defined 'integration' as 'making a whole out of the previously separate components [of a human community]'.⁵ Functionalist social scientists seem to conceive of this 'making a whole' too much as a consensual, non-violent process,⁶ which is almost exclusively seen 'from above', through the eyes of 'the system'.⁷ Perhaps it is advisable to strip the concept of this functionalist connotation.

A useful first approximation was given by Victoria Bonnell, when she wrote:

I am using the term to denote the state of mind shared by a group of people who feel at least minimal attachment to certain hegemonic institutions (political, economic, social, cultural) and who are willing to accept the existing ground rules for their continuation (possibly in some modified form). The notion of 'integration' serves to draw our attention to the circumstances that have induced workers to accept or reject established arrangements.⁸

This characterization roughly indicates the direction in which our thoughts should go, although certain questions remain: what precisely are these 'hegemonic institutions' to which the 'minimal attachment' relates? What exactly are the 'existing ground rules'? And where does the boundary lie between modification and rejection of these rules?

Let's start with the 'hegemonic institutions'. The most important ones seem to be, first, the *state*, which consists of at least four apparatuses – the apparatus of violence (army, police); the legislature; the power centre which directs the state (for example, the autocrat, parliament); and the financial apparatus (taxes and so on) which constitutes the material basis of the other parts of the state – and, of course, second, the *capitalist economy* or, more specifically, the commodity character of the means of production with its logical results (competition, profit maximization and so on).

'Existing ground rules' would then be those required patterns of behaviour which legitimize and support the 'hegemonic institutions'; for instance, the duty of all citizens to obey existing laws and to strive for changes of these laws in a legal way; the right (and duty) of the state to monopolize the means of violence; the right (and duty) of the power centre to manage the state; the duty to pay taxes; the right (and duty) of capitalists to make profits. 'Modification' – as distinct from rejection – of these ground rules should then mean the changing of rules while maintaining their essence (for example, the right of US citizens to own a gun for self-defence is a modification, and not a rejection, of a ground rule (state monopoly of the means of violence)).

We can now say, on the basis of these descriptions, that a working class is completely integrated if it accepts all hegemonic institutions and the essence of their ground rules. Conversely, it can be said that a working class is completely unintegrated if it rejects all hegemonic institutions and the essence of all their ground rules. This definition takes into account historical research on the subject: resistance against (important) parts of a national system does not mean the rejection of the system as such.⁹

Non-integration can have two 'ideal-typical' forms. The first one is *internationalist* non-integration deriving from conscious attempts of (parts of) a working class to overcome the limitations of the nation-state. In this case, workers are prepared to break the law, to arm themselves, to form organs of direct democracy and to replace the capitalist economy by a consciously regulated one. The second form of non-integration can be called *pre-national* non-integration, and refers to (parts of) a working class living and thinking only in the small world of their locality or region. The analytical relevance of this second form is sometimes underestimated. Ashworth rightly remarked that 'far into the nineteenth century, even in the countries economically most advanced, it was commonplace outside the few large towns for people from the next county to be regarded as, in some importance sense, "foreigners"'.¹⁰ This regionalism – which, by the way, can be very well combined with loyalty to the monarch – might promote, as well as hamper, national integration. If a government succeeds in transforming loyalty to a region (*Heimat*) into loyalty to the nation-state, national integration is strengthened.¹¹ This, according to Cunow, was the case in Germany during the First World War:

Many of those who fought bravely on the battlefield were surely not moved first of all by national feeling – a feeling of being bound up with an entire nation and its fate – but rather by a feeling for their native soil, that is, that much more intimate feeling of being bound up with a particular native district and its inhabitants.¹²

If on the other hand, regional peculiarities were suppressed by the nation-state, the result could be strong opposition to integration, as was the case in southern Italy and southern France.

In what follows I will discuss several societal factors that – according to the ‘common sense’ of historians, political scientists and sociologists – may have contributed to working-class integration. In doing so I will restrict myself to the relatively short period 1871–1914, although I am aware that this may risk paying insufficient attention to long-term influences (such as, for instance, Republican traditions in the French case). But this chapter is intended as a first and preliminary contribution. Its only aim is to discuss some factors that *may* have fulfilled a role in the process of working-class integration and to establish in a very rough way their explanatory potential.

After discussing these factors separately, I will try to give a provisional synthesis.

The National Process of Capital Accumulation

A first important factor might be the national process of capital accumulation, two aspects of which have a direct bearing on our subject: its timing and its profitability.

- With regard to the *timing* of the process of accumulation, what was the stage of industrialization reached during the period under consideration? Did modern industry already have a firm basis in the national economy or was it still trying to take root? The early years of capitalist development, when a feudal and agricultural society is transformed fairly rapidly, create enormous strains and discontents.¹³ After a while, the new system of production and distribution consolidates itself and the new working class is permanently integrated so far as the *productive* sphere is concerned. From then on, resistance is no longer directed against industrial society as such, but against (the consequences of) its capitalist nature.

An indication of the stages of industrial development in the five countries is given in Table 3.1. From the table, it can be seen that Great Britain, Germany and, to a lesser extent, France were industrialized countries by 1913, while Italy and Russia were just experiencing their ‘take-off’. This seems to imply that the working classes in the first three countries were better integrated in the productive sphere than in the last two countries.¹⁴

- The *profitability* of the process of accumulation related to real wages. Workers do have a fundamental interest in the prosperity of ‘their’ capitalists – at least as long as the system is relatively stable; ‘If capitalists do not appropriate profit, if they do not exploit, production falls, consumption decreases, and no other group can satisfy its material needs. Current realization of material interests of capitalists is a necessary condition for the future realization of material interests of

Table 3.1 Per capita volume of industrial production, 1800–1913 (Great Britain in 1900 = 100)

	1800	1860	1913
Great Britain	16	64	115
Germany	8	15	85
France	9	20	59
Italy	8	10	26
Russia	6	8	20

Source: Bairoch, Paul (1982), 'International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980' *Journal of European Economic History*, 11 (2), pp. 269–333 at p. 281.

any group under capitalism.¹⁵ In this sense, workers will identify themselves with capitalists.¹⁶ However, successful accumulation of capital does not automatically imply working-class integration in the sphere of *consumption*. In this respect, economic growth is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition. Two other conditions should also be met. First, the possibility of sharing in the fruits of prosperity is important, especially when workers have started to build trade-union organizations. The relevance of this point can be clearly seen in Russia: the growth of working-class militancy during the years immediately preceding the First World War was a consequence of the fact that:

... government and employer policies and actions combined to block workers from making concrete gains while simultaneously providing a limited and deceptively auspicious opportunity for collective organization. Consequently, unionized workers became aware of their organizational potential without, however, benefiting from it in any way. This served to undermine their willingness to pursue a gradualist approach while fortifying the belief in militant action.¹⁷

But even the achievement of material gain is not enough to ensure an integrating effect. Also of importance is the relationship between these gains and the general development of the economy. The 'consciousness effect' of wage increases is determined decisively by the working-class perception of overall growth. If workers get the impression that the national economy is going through a period of strong growth from which they do not benefit sufficiently, then militancy will probably be stimulated.¹⁸

Despite the scarcity of reliable figures we may surmise with some certainty that there was no continuous wage increase in any of the five countries in the period leading up to 1914. Apparently wages increased from about 1890 to about 1900 and then either stagnated or dropped.¹⁹ Consequently, we can suspect that, so far as consumption is concerned, there was no integration in any of the countries concerned. This observation is confirmed by the European strike waves during the years preceding the First World War.²⁰

International Prestige

A country's international prestige is, in many ways, related to the national process of accumulation. If one can say that workers living in capitals experience a certain 'hegemonic impulse' extending to the nation as a whole,²¹ then it is also possible to assume that workers living in a prestigious, economically and politically powerful nation-state will feel a certain 'hegemonic impulse' on an international scale. In this way, an indirect identification of (parts of) the working class with the nation-state emerges.²²

The connection is particularly clear in colonial matters. Our knowledge about working-class attitudes regarding colonies is limited,²³ but the little that we do know suggests that *if* workers had opinions on this matter they often identified themselves to some extent with the 'educational' tasks of their national elites in the peripheral world.²⁴

In addition, we shall have to admit, even if we do not adhere to the theory of labour aristocracies, that parts of the working classes may have profited directly from imperialism. This seems to apply, for example, to the textile workers in Lancashire and Scotland and the metalworkers in Birmingham and Sheffield.²⁵

It is obvious that colonial power did not exactly reflect general economic and political power. Germany, in particular, was a great power but, as a latecomer on the colonial scene, it possessed only a relatively small overseas empire. Russia, on the other hand, disposed of an enormous mass of colonial areas, but these were not colonies in the modern sense and, therefore, can only be considered as an indication of power within the world system with many qualifications.²⁶

All in all, we may conclude that one nation-state (Italy) had little international prestige, while the other four countries could all, in some sense, be considered as important empires.

Interregional Connections

The formation of interregional connections may have strongly furthered national integration in general and working-class integration in particular. Before the advent of the train (and, later, the car) contacts between the capital, other towns and the countryside were minimal. With the exception of regions along coasts and rivers everyday transport and communications did not extend further than 20, 30, or perhaps 40 kilometres. The railways, and the roads leading to the railway stations, effected a drastic change. They brought, in Eugen Weber's words, 'the isolated patches of the countryside out of their autarky – cultural as well as economic – into the market economy and the modern world'.²⁷

The pace of railway construction depended, of course, on economic and military interests – and on the financial means the builders succeeded in collecting nationally and internationally. Around the turn of the century, Russia already had the most extensive railroad system in Europe, but the area

which had to be covered was also by far the largest of all countries. In a comparative perspective it seems useful to relate the length of railroad systems to the number of inhabitants, in order to give a rough indication of the impact the transport revolution had on the countryside. As can be seen in Table 3.2, by this standard Great Britain, France and Germany were way ahead of Italy and Russia.

In the wake of the transport revolution, written communication was facilitated, especially after the system of prepayment of letters by relatively cheap postage stamps had been introduced.²⁸ The improvement in transport, as well as in communication facilities, must have promoted the genesis of a national identity. Markets expanded, people from different parts of the nation-state were put in touch with each other, the culture and politics of big cities spread over the whole country, the construction of national organizations and mass media became possible, and, above all, the idea that all citizens are subjects of the same state became generally accepted.

Table 3.2 Railroads in kilometres per million inhabitants, 1870–1911

	1870–71	1890–91	1910–11
Great Britain	826.0	840.7	788.8
Germany	462.6	867.8	943.1
France	430.6	868.9	1022.3
Italy	239.9	449.8	521.3
Russia	127.0	259.7	414.3

Source: Calculation by the author, based on Mitchell, B.R. (1977), 'Statistischer Anhang', in Carlo M. Cipolla and K. Borchardt (eds), *Die Entwicklung der industriellen Gesellschaften*, Stuttgart: Fischer, pp. 485–534 at pp. 489 and 514.

Compulsory Education

Compulsory education has progressively been introduced in all developed capitalist societies, once a certain industrial level had been reached.²⁹ Military, economic and political factors played a role in this – sometimes combined, sometimes separately.³⁰ After a while, the competition between states and national economies ensured that this innovation was widely introduced.

After the German unification in 1871, the old Prussian laws regarding compulsory education were introduced throughout the whole German Empire.³¹ Scotland introduced compulsory education in 1872 (England and Wales followed in 1889); France did likewise in 1882.³² After the formal acceptance of the laws it took some time before all the children of these countries in fact attended elementary schools. Officially, Italy also had a compulsory education system but this remained partly ineffective.³³ In Russia, no general system of compulsory education became effective until after the October Revolution. It is true that the reforms of 1864 installed *zemstvos*

(elective county councils) with educational tasks but, overall, enrolment in primary schools increased only very slowly afterwards. The revolution of 1905 brought a qualitative leap, but, even then, no more than about 50 per cent of the various age groups went to elementary schools.³⁴

Given these facts it comes as no surprise that in 1914 nearly 100 per cent of all Prussian, French and British brides and bridegrooms were able to write, while the rate of literacy in Italy and Russia was much lower. At the outbreak of the First World War less than half of all Italian children of school age actually attended schools.³⁵ With regard to Russia it has been said that:

... the percentage of illiteracy on the eve of the War was still extraordinarily high. We know that only a small percentage of Russian children went to school. A still smaller portion had received any scholastic training in the past, with the result that it seems doubtful whether the general average of literacy was more than 20 or 25 per cent. One should remember that even among those children who went to school many never saw a newspaper or book in later years, and their knowledge of even the rudiments of reading and writing therefore was purely nominal.³⁶

The situation among industrial workers, however, was better than among the population as a whole: in 1918 the rate of literacy in this group was 80.3 per cent for men and 48.2 per cent for women.³⁷

The political effects of schooling were not unambiguous. The ruling classes were aware of this, as is shown by their debates on the matter.³⁸ In the long run, the advocates of compulsory education won the debate everywhere, if only because modern state bureaucracies and developed capitalist economies needed educated and literate farmers and workers. In order to suppress, from the outset, any subversive influences that education might exert, children were thoroughly indoctrinated with 'patriotic' values.³⁹ In some countries this indoctrination was accompanied by the continuous dissemination of religious thought, but in countries where the Church was an independent hierarchy alongside the state apparatus, conflicts often arose about the influence of each in primary schools.⁴⁰ In all cases, the children were combined in gigantic classes (often consisting of 70, and sometimes even 120, pupils), and became used to the daily and mechanical practice of obedience.⁴¹ In Britain, schools even introduced regular drill exercises, in order to promote the discipline and health of the children and meet the needs of the military.⁴² From the (limited) literature on the subject one gets the impression that working-class parents were not eager to send their children to school because they disliked surrendering control over their offspring. In time, compulsory education was established everywhere and the resistance to it was replaced by resignation. A British headmaster, comparing 1882 with 1900, wrote: '*Parents in relation to teachers*: Much more friendly; hostility, insolence, violence or threats, common in 1882, now hardly ever occur.'⁴³

While the parents adjusted themselves to the new system, the children were to a certain extent indoctrinated with dominant values. It thus seems plausible that primary education did play a part in working-class integration, although the exact degree of influence it exerted remains unclear. The indoctrinating

effects of compulsory education must have been strongest in Germany, France and Great Britain, and weaker in Italy and Russia.

Suffrage

Göran Therborn has convincingly shown that 'the fight of the working class for universal suffrage and freely elected government was never by itself sufficient to enforce the introduction of bourgeois democracy'.⁴⁴ Other factors, such as mobilization for war or democratic pressure by agrarian petty landowners, had to play a supporting role. These pressures forced the ruling classes to make concessions in a parliamentary direction but it was only with much reluctance that they extended suffrage. Moorhouse has given a useful description of this process in Britain:

Political integration was essentially a ruling class problem in the formation and maintenance of legitimacy but not in the way usually presented. For it was not simply a question of the legitimation of democracy as a political system but rather the legitimation of a 'democratic' system whose leaders and range of concern could remain substantially unchanged from those of a 'pre-democratic' era. The majority of the ruling class believed that incorporation was necessary to bind the masses to the prevailing system but also wanted such integration to be constrained and channelled so that, though institutional forms might change, and could be promoted as having changed, the differential distribution of power in society would be unaltered.⁴⁵

Reconstructing the precise elements that brought about the uneven extension of suffrage in the five countries during the period under consideration would lead us too far from the point. Suffice it to observe that Britain's stable political structure allowed for a relatively slow extension; the proportion of men⁴⁶ entitled to vote remained at around 35 per cent until the early 1880s, then increased drastically and kept fluctuating around 62 or 63 per cent. In France and Germany these percentages were higher; in both countries they fluctuated around 90 per cent (see Table 3.3).

Italy and Russia form a remarkable contrast. For a long time after unification, only a very small percentage of Italian men were entitled to vote; this situation changed when in 1912 the liberal Giolitti government, as part of its campaign for support of the Libyan war, extended the percentage in one stroke to more than 90. In Russia things were even more difficult. The Duma, installed in 1905 by imperial decree on a broad franchise, began to work in May 1906 but was dissolved in July of the same year. The second Duma ended in a similar way in 1907. In June of that year the franchise was narrowed, and the third and fourth Dumas (1907–12 and 1912–17) were considerably less representative. Hence, in Italy, as well as in Russia, the working class had only a very limited experience with indirect democracy in 1914.

An extended, durable, franchise meant the partial political recognition of workers as fully-fledged citizens and thus may have promoted working-class integration. It strongly supports the notion of a national community in which

Table 3.3 Men entitled to vote as a percentage of male age group defined by electoral law, 1870–1913

	France	Germany	Italy	Great Britain
1870			8.3	
1871	95.4	81.2		32.7
1874		89.4	8.4	
1876	85.1		8.8	
1877	84.0	90.7		
1878		91.9		
1880			8.9	
1881	81.9	89.3		35.9
1882			25.1	
1883				36.0
1884		90.6		
1885	81.0			63.9
1886			29.9	63.3
1887		91.8		
1889	83.6			62.8
1890		92.0	33.5	
1892			25.4	63.6
1893	86.1	93.5		
1895			25.4	62.8
1897			25.2	
1898	88.4	93.5		
1900			26.5	62.7
1902	91.4			
1903		93.7		
1904			29.3	
1906	92.8			62.3
1907		93.2		
1909			32.7	
1910	90.9			62.6
1912		93.3		
1913			[90.8]	

Source: Kohl, Jürgen (1983), 'Zur langfristigen Entwicklung der politischen Partizipation in Westeuropa', in Otto Büsch and Peter Steinbach, (eds), *Vergleichende Europäische Wahlgeschichte*, Berlin: Colloquium, pp. 377–411 at p. 410.

all those who contribute to welfare and prosperity are entitled to a respectable status – the idea of a 'national reciprocity of rights and obligations' (Bendix).

Simultaneously, an extended franchise furthered the growth and consolidation of working-class parties with radical socialist platforms, as is indicated by Table 3.4.

This electoral growth in itself may have promoted integration, as Abendroth assumed.⁴⁷ But here we should remember that parliaments were not equally important everywhere. In Great Britain, France and Italy parliamentary

Table 3.4 Social Democratic/Labour votes as a percentage of the total electorate, 1871–1914¹

	Germany	Italy	Great Britain	France
1871	1.6			
1874	4.1			
1877	5.5			
1878	4.8			
1881	3.4			
1884	5.9			
1887	7.8			
1890	14.1			
1893	16.8			
1895		3.9		
1897		5.1		
1898	18.4			
1900		7.3	0.9	
1903	24.0			
1904		12.8		
1906			4.4	7.7
1907	24.4			
1909		11.9		
1910			4.8 ²	
1912	29.4			
1913		13.6 ³		
1914				12.4

Notes:

¹ This table gives the Social Democratic vote as a percentage of the *total electorate*, and not (as is more usual) as a percentage of the *valid votes*. This is done because in my opinion the first percentage gives a better impression of socialist influence than the second.

² In 1910 two elections took place in Britain: one in January (the Labour Party got 6.6% of the votes of the total electorate at that time) and one in December (4.8%).

³ This is the sum of the percentages of the Socialist Party, the Independent Socialists and the Reformist Socialists.

Source: Calculation by the author.

authority was relatively great; on the other hand, the Reichstag and the Duma were only quasi-parliaments. In Germany and Russia, social democratic parties had no real political influence, even if they had a large parliamentary representation, as in Germany.

Armies

Armies played an important role in the process of working-class integration in two ways: first through the direct consequences of military service; and, second, through general societal influences exerted by the apparatuses of violence.⁴⁸

After the French defeat in 1871 the Prussian system of military recruitment (general two-year compulsory conscription combined with one-year volunteers) was adopted by almost all Continental powers. The precise terms were modified: Italy had a compulsory military service of three years (from 1875), just like France from 1885–89 until 1905 (when the length of service was reduced to two years, only to be extended to three years again in 1913), while Russia kept its conscripts in the barracks for six years from 1874 onwards. Only Great Britain maintained its old system. However, in this country, too, workers came under military influence due to the attraction of the Volunteer Force, founded in 1859 for fear of a French invasion, for an increasing number of working-class men.

Although, of course, the primary motive for Continental army reforms was of a military nature, the ongoing stream of conscripts clearly must have exerted an influence on the mentality of the population at large.⁴⁹ The effects of the army as an agency of socialization were contradictory. It is highly probable that the young soldiers experienced their term of service as a combination of horror and pleasure. Undoubtedly the draftees had negative feelings about their prolonged separation from home and family; and the chicanery and lust for power of their officers must have cooled down their enthusiasm, if it ever existed. Conscripts accused of insubordination were punished severely in all armies. Sentences meted out varied from a blow to the face to a stay in prison.⁵⁰ Occasionally the brutality went further: in the Russian army – which did not normally treat its soldiers worse than others – a draftee could be whipped with birch rods in front of the entire unit.⁵¹

But these negative aspects (and other hardships such as the poor food, for instance) were at least partly counterbalanced by the companionship, the temporary liberation from the restrictions of family life and the impressive uniform. Some less obvious temptations of military service become visible when we look at the hundreds of thousands of British workers who joined the Volunteer Force: they were attracted by the recreational aspects, like rifle shooting and even drill exercises.⁵²

Especially at times when there was no clear threat of war and soldiers therefore did not have to fear for their lives, feelings of hatred against the army might have been weaker than pride in being 'allowed to serve' – the more so if the term of service did not last too long. In addition there was the indoctrinating effect of barrack life, which Victor Kiernan has described so ably:

It is hard for the individual to go on feeling at odds with the life around him, and the more so when this is as close and all-enveloping as an army's; the most reluctant would be impelled to come to terms with it. He would learn to hug his chains If on common days of the week a man suffered from his army boots (which were playing havoc with Europe's feet), his easiest consolation was grumbling at the villainous foreigners whose fault it was that he had to go clumping around in them. Thus army life intensified that diversion of discontents outwards against foreign bogies that was so large a part of Europe's adaptation to this traumatic period of social transition. Altogether, the average individual would come out of it more firmly integrated in the national collective.⁵³

On the other hand, armies – reflecting class cleavages in the antagonism between common soldiers and officers – could stimulate rebelliousness. It was not without reason that French and German generals were afraid of socialist agitation.⁵⁴

To a certain extent, the above-mentioned elements were the same for all countries (except Britain) because the internal structure of their armies was largely similar. The differences between them become visible when we take into account the diverging environments in which military organizations worked. Army leaders had the best chances of resisting subversion if they were helped by national systems of education and forms of real or pseudo-parliamentary representation. The less developed the civic feelings of the lower classes were, the stronger were apathy and resistance in the army. Germany, certainly after 1871, experienced a conscious commitment to military duty among broad layers of the population⁵⁵ – a phenomenon surely connected with the well-developed educational system, the existence of a (quasi-)parliament and recent military successes. In Russia, on the other hand, the population was largely indifferent. The modernization of the tsarist army had always been ‘flawed’; the military apparatus was only an ‘institutional shell’, lacking ‘supportive institutions and attitudes of the society as a whole’.⁵⁶ In France and Italy the situation was slightly more complicated: in both countries part of the population seems to have identified itself with the army, whereas particularly in the (southern) regions with autonomist tendencies the army was held in less esteem, and attempts to avoid military service (through emigration, for instance) were frequent.⁵⁷

In summary, we may suspect that compulsory military service stimulated working-class integration more if (a) the possibility of war seemed small, (b) the service was considered more as a duty for fully-fledged citizens and (c) the army was held in higher esteem. This last point brings us to the second aspect.

The prestige enjoyed by armies is multifaceted. First, military successes in confrontations with other armed forces are relevant. We may surmise that workers would be less likely to identify themselves with armies lurching from defeat to defeat than with those that won one war after another. The Russian army most certainly was not a ‘winner’ – consider the Crimean War or the war with Japan. The Italian army was no more successful; it even proved itself incapable of winning a minor colonial war (the battle of Adowa in 1896). On the other hand, the British and German armies possessed the aura of victors. In France the image was less clear.

Second, the fiscal pressure exercised on the populace for military reasons is of importance. The arms race during the last decades before the First World War caused an increase in military expenditure per capita in all countries (see Table 3.5). This may have promoted discontent with the military, and the fact that Social Democrats in several countries used this item in their propaganda gives some credibility to this assumption.

Third, the use of armies for internal repression should be considered. In all countries, military interventions against strikes, riots and general unrest in order to support local authorities in maintaining law and order were normal occurrences.⁵⁸ This strongly stimulated dislike of the army in the more or less

Table 3.5 Military appropriations per capita of population, 1880–1914 (US\$)

	1880	1890	1900	1910	1914
Great Britain	3.60	4.03	6.17	7.56	8.53
Germany	2.27	2.95	3.64	4.17	8.52
France	4.22	4.87	5.41	6.70	7.33
Italy	1.80	2.63	2.44	3.50	3.81
Russia	1.59	1.32	1.53	1.91	2.58

Source: Wright, Quincy (1965), *A Study of War*, 2nd edn, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 670–71.

militant working-class milieux. However, those parts of the working class that had not directly or indirectly experienced military aggression were, of course, less sensitive in this respect.

While the prestige of the army may thus have furthered integration in Germany and Britain (and perhaps in France also), fiscal pressures and strike-breaking will have hampered integration in all countries.

The Modern Welfare State

The take-off of the modern welfare state took place during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The core of all social insurance systems consists of four elements: accident, sickness, old age and unemployment insurance. Although no particular order can be found in the introduction of these elements, accident insurance normally came first and unemployment insurance last.⁵⁹ A sample of data giving the percentage of the working populations covered by insurance schemes until the First World War is summarized in Table 3.6.

From the table, it is evident that Germany was the leader in this field, that Britain was a good follower in terms of accident insurance, and that France and Italy lagged far behind.⁶⁰ I do not know of any comparable Russian figures, but it seems plausible that the situation in that country was little better than that in Italy. Before 1914 Russia had only three insurance arrangements. The oldest arrangement, introduced in 1861, but only put into practice in 1893, covered work-related illnesses, injuries and deaths to workers in mining, the railroads, and the Navy Department. In 1910 about 22 000 people were covered by this regulation. The second arrangement, the accident-and-death compensation law of 1903 which covered workers in factories, mines and foundries, and was subsequently extended to government employees, was no more impressive: 'It did not ... introduce compulsory insurance and was weak from many other points of view: employers, individually accountable, frequently could not or would not pay claims; benefits were denied on grounds of negligence by the worker; administration was entirely in the hands of employers and officials'.⁶¹

Table 3.6 Percentage of working population covered by social insurance, 1885–1915

	Type of Insurance	Germany	France	Italy	Great Britain
1885	A	17	—	—	—
	S	22	—	—	—
	O	—	—	—	—
	U	—	—	—	—
1890	A	66	—	—	—
	S	32	—	—	—
	O	—	—	—	—
	U	—	—	—	—
1895	A	76	—	—	—
	S	34	—	6*	—
	O	54	—	—	—
	U	—	—	—	—
1900	A	71	10	(5)	39
	S	39	9	(6)	—
	O	53	(8)	—	—
	U	—	—	—	—
1905	A	69	13	9	37
	S	41	13	6	—
	O	51	0	1	—
	U	—	—	—	—
1910	A	81	20 (e)	0	70
	S	44	18	(6)	—
	O	53	**13	(2)	—
	U	—	—	—	—
1915	A	71	20 (e)	(11)	68*
	S	43	15*	(6)	66*
	O	57	11*	2 (e)	—
	U	—	—	—	11*

Key: A = Accident insurance; S = sickness insurance; O = old-age insurance; U = unemployment insurance.

Note: () = partial estimation; (e) = rough estimation; N* = figure of year before; *N = figure of year after; **N = figure of two years after.

Source: Tables A3, A4, A5, and A6 in Alber, Jens (1982), *Vom Armenhaus zum Wohlfahrtsstaat*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus.

The third was the Health and Accident Act of 1912, which covered workers and employees in manufacturing, mining and similar industries and which applied to 23 per cent of the labour force in those sectors.

Two approaches to the introduction of social insurance systems can be discerned. In a number of countries, welfare programmes were introduced with the intention of suppressing social and political unrest and of taking the wind out of the labour movement's sails. This we may call the 'heavy-hand'

approach. In a number of other cases, welfare programmes were introduced as a 'helping hand' – that is, as an attempt to support working-class self-help and, in that way, to integrate labour.⁶²

The Russian case is a clear example of a belated and largely failed attempt to apply the heavy-hand approach. A quote from a confidential circular by the minister of the interior, N.A. Maklakov, referring to the Health and Accident Act (1912) just mentioned, may illustrate this:

Labour legislation with us is quite a new phenomenon without historical precedent, and the working classes are very much under the influence of revolutionary parties who exploit them in their own interests. But the working classes have realized from previous experience that the main burden of strikes falls on their own shoulders, and have ceased to believe in revolutionary slogans. The present moment is therefore very opportune for *withholding the working masses from revolutionary activity by introducing insurance legislation*⁶³

The contrast between the heavy and helping hand is most clearly visible if we compare the two leading social insurance states, Germany and Britain. Ritter has made a systematic comparison and found the following differences: the SPD was considered as a revolutionary threat while Labour was not, therefore, the German government primarily wanted to reduce Social Democratic influence in the working class, while the British government did not; hence, the target groups and functioning of social laws in both countries diverged. In Germany, social insurance was primarily intended to cover skilled workers, the most important element in the social base of the SPD and the Free Trade Unions. British social policy was in sharp contrast to that in Germany, at least until the National Insurance Act of 1911, being aimed at protecting the most destitute – children and workers unable to organize the effective representation of their interests. In Germany, the trade unions were ignored as regards the administration of insurance, in so far as this was possible. In Britain the friendly societies were aided in their attempts to establish insurance. In Germany, according to the principle of *divide et impera*, white-collar workers received a separate pension insurance; in Britain they did not.⁶⁴

The French and Italian cases bear a certain resemblance to the British case. In both countries the early social insurance legislation tried to bind the existing mutual aid societies (*société de secours mutuel*, *società di mutuo soccorso*) to the state apparatus.⁶⁵

In what measure did social registration (either from a helping-hand or from a heavy-hand perspective) contribute to the integration of working classes? In all countries there was a deep-rooted working-class suspicion against the new form of state intervention. That explains why the helping-hand approach initially met with little success. In Britain, as well as in France and Italy, many workers preferred to join autonomous organizations of self-help and felt no inclination to be in a state harness, because protection from above was associated with the acceptance of the 'traditional tutelage of the lower classes'.⁶⁶ One example may illustrate this: on 15 April 1886 Italian Law No. 3818 was passed by parliament. This offered the *società di mutuo soccorso* legal recognition and, thus, certain financial advantages. But by 31 December 1894

only 23.7 per cent of all mutual aid societies had made use of this opportunity.⁶⁷

In countries where the heavy-hand approach dominated (Germany, Russia), social insurance also does not seem to have made a substantial *direct* contribution to working-class integration. In Russia this is rather self-evident because social legislation as such was not very impressive. But the primary aim of weakening the labour movement was not attained. On the contrary, the Russian health and accident insurance system of 1912 *promoted* organized labour:

At the time, the Russian labor movement had been driven underground. Nation-wide trade unions did not exist at all. The few local unions that there were had a total membership of scarcely more than 20,000–30,000 throughout the country. The establishment of a system of health insurance (however limited) of self-administration by the insured, gave the labor movement an outlet for some of its energies. Thus there arose a new type of labor movement, the so-called workers' insurance movement, which aimed at improving and extending self-administration by the insured. In a few years large numbers of talented organizers and labor leaders made their appearance.⁶⁸

In Germany the situation was, to a certain extent, similar: here, too, the Social Democratic labour movement got a strong impulse from social insurance institutions. But in this case the permanent collaboration with members of other social classes in the management of funds might have promoted integration: 'This process did not take place, as Bismarck had wished, by bringing about the workers' alienation from their own organisations. In fact, it came about precisely through their own organisations'.⁶⁹ Besides, one may suspect that old-age insurance – which was only important in Germany (see Table 3.6) – stimulated integration to a certain extent. Perhaps Bismarck was right when he said that a state pension, however small it may be, gives people 'a vested interest in the state'.⁷⁰

In sum, it seems that only in Germany did social insurance have some integrating effect.

Conclusion

The list of causal factors mentioned in the foregoing is certainly not comprehensive. One might think of other explanatory variables such as, for instance, the role of churches, of languages or the invention of 'mass-producing traditions' (Hobsbawm). But even our limited sample of potential causes makes it possible to formulate two preliminary conclusions.

First, there is a *methodological* insight to gain. Our incomplete inventory allows us to establish the fact that many variables are fundamentally ambiguous and in themselves cannot offer an explanation because they may hamper, as well as further, working-class integration. Take, for instance, the rate of literacy. If workers are able to read they may take note of subversive, as well as nationalist, papers and books. Which of both alternatives eventually

will dominate depends on other variables like the strength and radicalism of organized labour, the performance of state authorities and so on. Something similar could be said about such factors as (male) suffrage or compulsory military service. In addition, many factors are multifaceted and may therefore simultaneously exert influences in different directions. A strong and successful army, for example, implies high fiscal pressure as well as national prestige. Which of the influences is stronger will, again, depend on other variables.

Both the ambiguity and the contradictory effects of variables indicate not only that mono-causal explanations can offer no solution,⁷¹ but also that every single variable should always be considered in conjunction with at least some of the other variables. Simple cause-consequence patterns, which have proved their analytical usefulness in situations of relatively low complexity, seem to be deficient in our case because the essence of these patterns lies in their bi- or multivariate connections, in which *independent* variables, perhaps via *intermediate* variables, explain a *dependent* variable. Although in the case of working-class integration this kind of relationship can be used now and again, it is probably of almost no help in a comparative analysis such as that which we are confronted with here. Many different interdependencies may occur, without a general causal sequence between these variables.⁷² This insight coincides with a conclusion reached by social scientists studying problems of similar complexity (for example, the Cold War and its arms race or the (under)development of national economies); therefore, these scholars sometimes use the concept of a *causal configuration*, which means that there exists an interdependent totality of variables without generally valid explanatory values.⁷³

Second, we can say at least something about the initial question of the diverging degrees of working-class integration in the five countries we have investigated. From the survey presented it seems reasonable to assume (though with many reservations) that there did indeed exist a qualitative difference between Britain, Germany and France on the one hand and Italy and Russia on the other. If we set aside all factors working in the same direction in all countries (for example, the lack of integration at the consumption level) and if we keep in mind the things just said about the problem of the causal configuration we may quite provisionally come to the conclusion that there is a certain clustering of integration-promoting factors in Britain, Germany and France, which seems to be lacking in Italy and Russia. Table 3.7 summarizes some of our results in a dichotomous and extremely schematic fashion.

This outline neglects some factors like 'national prestige' which was less important in Italy than it was in Russia. But then we should remember that the working-class perception of Russian prestige was hampered by the partial absence of transport, media and literacy in this country (another example of the interdependency of variables).

If my preliminary analysis contains more than one grain of truth, then some doubt is cast on the comparative value of the theory of 'negative integration'. For, according to its developer Guenther Roth, Imperial Germany, Italy before the First World War and the French Third Republic were all examples of partial (negative) working-class integration, while Britain would have

Table 3.7 Comparison of integration-promoting factors: Britain, Germany and France versus Italy and Russia

Britain, Germany, France	Italy, Russia
Industrialized before 1914	Industrial take-off
Highly developed system of transport and communications	Less developed system of transport and communications
Highly developed system of primary education	Less developed system of primary education
(Male) electorate comprises relatively large part of (male) population	(Male) electorate comprises relatively small part of (male) population (in Italy until 1912)
Universal conscription (except in Britain) combined with general education and large electorate	Universal conscription not combined with general education and large electorate
Army prestigious	Army not prestigious

known 'a far-reaching integration of the lower classes into the national community' and Russia would have attempted a 'complete subordination of the masses'.⁷⁴ Our overview, however, suggests, (i) that in no country working-class integration went as far as Roth suggests (because even in Britain several counterinfluences were effective), and (ii) that the degree of working-class integration in the three cases of 'negative integration' differed remarkably.

Let me conclude with two brief remarks, in order to avoid misunderstandings. First, I would like to stress that my analysis of working-class integration is concerned with medium-term structural developments and that no precipitate conclusions can be drawn from it as to 'August 1914'. There exists no unique correspondence between 'national integration' and 'war enthusiasm'. Of course, workers applauding belligerent armies are proof of the non-existence of a coherent proletarian internationalism, but not every war-enthusiastic worker is therefore necessarily nationally integrated; other factors may play a role in his or her mind such as, for instance, the opportunity to visit foreign countries or the temporary end to the monotony of everyday life.⁷⁵

Second, my analysis does not imply that the process of working-class integration is irreversible. The further developments during the years 1914–18 show very clearly that even high levels of integration could be reversed.

Notes

- 1 *Verhandlungen des Reichstags. Stenographische Berichte*, 9. Legislaturperiode, 5. Session, vol. II, pp. 1120f.
- 2 'It has been calculated that there were twenty-seven Social-Democratic organizations in the army in 1905, while more than double that number of civilian party committees or groups disseminated propaganda among the troops.' Keep, John H.L. (1963), *The Rise of Social Democrats in Russia*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 272.
- 3 Julliard, Jacques (1964), 'La C.G.T. devant la guerre (1900–1914)', *Le Mouvement Social*, 49, reprinted in Julliard, Jacques (1988), *Autonomie ouvrière. Etudes sur le syndicalisme d'action directe*, Paris: Seuil, pp. 94–111.

- 4 Geary, Dick (1982), 'Identifying Militancy: the Assessment of Working-Class Attitudes towards State and Society', in Richard J. Evans (ed.), *The German Working Class 1888-1933. The Politics of Everyday Life*, London and Totowa: Croom Helm and Barnes & Noble, pp. 220-46.
- 5 Deutsch, Karl W. (1970), 'Integration and Autonomy: Some Concepts and Ideas', *Ekistics*, 179, pp. 327-31, at p. 327. Almost the same definition is given by Robert Cooley Angell: 'Social integration is ... the fitting together of the parts of a social system to constitute a whole.' ('Social Integration', in David L. Sills (ed.) (1968), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. VII, pp. 380-86 at p. 380.
- 6 Pfalzgraff, Robert L. (1972), 'Karl Deutsch and the Study of Political Science', *Political Science Reviewer*, 2, Fall, pp. 90-111 at pp. 105-106.
- 7 This is, for instance, very clear in Myron Weiner's well-known 1965 article, 'Political Integration and Political Development', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 358, pp. 52-64, where forms of political integration are studied as 'strategies pursued by governments'.
- 8 Bonnell, Victoria E. (1980), 'Trade Unions, Parties, and the State in Tsarist Russia: A Study of Labor Politics in St. Petersburg and Moscow', *Politics and Society*, 9 (3), pp. 299-322 at p. 320.
- 9 Compare the following observation about France: 'The attitude of the socialists (and anarchists) towards the army was to a large extent determined by the fact that the army had been employed to break strikes, by its being used as a weapon of social oppression. The anti-militarist tradition, therefore, was strong and particularly so among the trade unions. But this anti-militarism was not necessarily the same as internationalism. Hatred of the army and anti-militarism could well be combined with the idea of the defence of the nation through popular militias' Schwarzmantel, John (1979), 'Nationalism and the French Working Class', in Cahm Eric and Fišera, Jean Claude (eds), *Socialism and Nationalism in Contemporary Europe (1848-1945)*, vol. 2, Nottingham: Spokesman, pp. 75-76.
- 10 Ashworth, W. (1974), 'Industrialization and the Economic Integration of Nineteenth-Century Europe', *European Studies Review*, 4, pp. 291-315 at p. 292.
- 11 This transfer of loyalties is accompanied by a loss of emotion. 'People speak freely of their "love of country"; but never of loving their nation. It is easy to say "my country"; but who would ever say "my nation"?' Guimar, Jean-Yves (1974), *L'idéologie national. Nation, Représentation, Propriété*, Paris: Champ Libre, p. 31.
- 12 Cunow, Heinrich (1921), *Die Marxsche Geschichts-, Gesellschafts- und Staatstheorie. Grundzüge einer Marxschen Soziologie*, vol. II, Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts, p. 31. See also Michels, Robert (1927), 'Vaterlandsliebe und Heimatgefühl', *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie*, 6, pp. 219-31.
- 13 Olson, Jr, Mancur (1963), 'Rapid Growth as a Destabilizing Force', *Journal of Economic History*, 23, pp. 529-52.
- 14 In the Italian case this not only meant the poor *attitudinal* integration of workers in the new manufactures and industries, but also the existence of a large group of people, displaced by modernization in agriculture, who were in fact not absorbed in the new industries. The result: 'Trade unionism in other European countries was almost exclusively an urban industrial phenomenon. By contrast, the Italian labor movement was strongly rooted in both town and country, a development related to the fact that most uprooted workers remained in agriculture.' Surace, Samuel J. (1966), *Ideology, Economic Change, and the Working Classes. The Case of Italy*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p. 68.
- 15 Przeworski, Adam (1985), *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 138-39.
- 16 Socialist and syndicalist workers have a second reason for preferring a quick accumulation of capital: it increases the number of workers and, in that way, the potential of the anti-capitalist forces. Illustrative is Griffuelhes' complaint about the slackness of French capitalists: 'What we are asking for, for our part, is for French bosses to be more like American bosses, so that as industrial and

commercial activity increases we can acquire some security, some certainty, which will put us in better shape for the struggle while it benefits us materially thanks to the demand for labour. We want our country to be bustling, active, humming, a real beehive that's always buzzing. This will increase our strength.' Griffuelhes, Victor (1910), 'L'infériorité des capitalistes français', *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, 226, December, pp. 329–32 at p. 332.

- 17 Bonnell, 'Trade Unions, Parties, and the State', pp. 318–19.
- 18 Lehnert, Detlev (1979), 'Zur politischen Transformation der deutschen Sozialdemokratie. Ein Interpretationsversuch für die Zeit des Übergangs zum organisierten Kapitalismus', in Bergmann, Jürgen *et al.* (eds), *Geschichte als politische Wissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, pp. 279–334 at p. 289.
- 19 This was the thesis advanced in Otto Bauer's 'Die Teuerung' [Report to the International Socialist Congress, Vienna, 23–29 August 1914], published in Haupt, Georges (1967), *Der Kongress fand nicht statt. Die Sozialistische Internationale 1914*, Vienna: Europa-Verlag, pp. 227–56.
- 20 Boll, Friedhelm (1984), 'Streikwellen im europäischen Vergleich', in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Hans-Gerhard Husung (eds), *Auf dem Wege zur Massengewerkschaft. Die Entwicklung der Gewerkschaften in Deutschland und Grossbritannien 1880–1914*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, p. 112, signals the following 'high points of national strike waves' between 1910 and 1914: France 1910 and 1911, Britain 1910 and 1913, German Empire 1910 and 1912, Italy 1911, and Russia 1912 and 1914.
- 21 Kiernan, Victor (1972), 'Victorian London: Unending Purgatory', *New Left Review*, 76, November–December, pp. 73–90 at p. 81.
- 22 An interesting example of this correlation between national prestige and 'hegemonic impulse' has been given by Lorwin: 'In the course of their national and international activities, the German socialists could not but become aware of the fact that their own successes were concomitant with the rise of the German Imperial State To put it paradoxically, the prestige and success of German labor and of German socialism were intertwined with, and dependent on, the success and prestige of the German Empire.' Lorwin, Lewis L. (1929), *Labor and Internationalism*, New York: Macmillan, pp. 142–43.
- 23 'If they [the workers] had strong feelings, one way or the other, they, unlike the loquacious educated classes, were silent about them.' Kiernan, Victor (1972), 'Preface to the Penguin Edition', in *The Lords of Human Kind. European Attitudes to the Outside World*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. xxi. Also on this problem: Eley, Geoff (1976), 'Social Imperialism in Germany. Reformist Synthesis or Reactionary Sleight of Hand?', in Radkau, Joachim and Geiss, Imanuel (eds), *Imperialismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Gedenkschrift für George W.F. Hallgarten*, Munich: Beck, pp. 71–86. A rare attempt to overcome the analytical difficulties is found in Price, Richard (1972), *An Imperial War and the British Working Class. Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War 1899–1902*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- 24 Bédarida writes about 'the superiority complex which they [the French workers] experienced in relation to those peoples considered as inferior and primitive.' Bédarida, François (1969), 'The French Working-Class Movement and Colonial Expansion – A Reappraisal', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 19, pp. 4–5 at p. 5. Some information on the attitudes of British workers toward colonialism is contained in Russell, Dave (1987), *Popular Music in England 1840–1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 112–30, 275–78. On Germany see Mergner, Gottfried (1988), 'Solidarität mit den "Wilden"? Das Verhältnis der deutschen Sozialdemokratie zu den afrikanischen Widerstandskämpfen in den ehemaligen deutschen Kolonien um die Jahrhundertwende', in Van Holthoon, Frits and van der Linden, Marcel (eds), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830–1940*, Leiden: Brill, vol. I, pp. 68–86.

As is well known, the national elites tried to use these colonialist sentiments in their social-imperialist policies. For instance, Disraeli, at the time of the extension of the franchise in the Second Reform Act, deliberately invoked these sentiments to

- distract attention from growing class conflicts in his own country. See Harcourt, Freda (1980), 'Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866–1868: A Question of Timing', *Historical Journal*, 23 (1), pp. 87–109. Similar things could be said about the Mexican adventure of Napoleon III or Bismarck's policies.
- 25 Chamberlain, M.E. (1984), 'Imperialism and Social Reform', in Eldridge, C.C. (ed.), *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 159–60.
 - 26 In 1909–10, Britain possessed an overseas area of 29 122 149 km² with 351 268 761 inhabitants; France: 6 835 727 km² (39 659 758 inh.); Germany: 2 657 204 km² (10 801 200 inh.); and Italy: 454 650 km² (679 551 inh.). Zöpfl, G. (1910), 'Kolonien und Kolonialpolitik', *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, vol. V, Jena, pp. 1026–31. Russia, of course, had no overseas colonies.
 - 27 Weber, Eugen (1976), *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 206.
 - 28 The importance of this innovation has escaped the attention of most social historians. See, however, Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, pp. 219–20, and especially Vincent, David (1985), 'Communication, Community and the State', in Emsley, Clive and Walvin, James (eds), *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians, 1760–1860. Essays Presented to Gwyn A. Williams*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 166–186.
 - 29 Industrialization was a necessary condition for the introduction of generalized compulsory education because the withdrawal of all children from five to seven years from the labour process and the maintenance of primary schools require a high level of labour productivity. This explains why German attempts to realize compulsory education during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries failed. Lohmann, Joachim (1967), 'Die Entwicklung der Halb- und Ganztagschule', *Paedagogica Historica*, 7, pp. 133–34, and Günther, Karl-Heinz *et al.* (1973), *Geschichte der Erziehung*, 11th edn, Berlin: Volk und Wissen, pp. 140–41.
 - 30 An analysis of causes in Flora, Peter (1972), 'Die Bildungsentwicklung im Prozess der Staaten- und Nationenbildung', in Ludz, Peter Christian (ed.), *Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte* [= Sonderheft 16 of the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte*], pp. 294–319.
 - 31 All German states had an eight-year period of compulsory education (6 to 14 age group), except Bavaria and Württemberg (7 to 14 age group).
 - 32 Flora, Peter (1975), *Indikatoren der Modernisierung. Ein historisches Datenhandbuch*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, p. 73.
 - 33 Bertoni Jovine, Dina (1965), *Storia dell'educazione popolare in Italia*, Bari: Laterza, pp. 148–67, 199–214.
 - 34 Kaser, Michael (1974), 'Education in Tsarist and Soviet Development', in Chimen Abramsky and Beryl J. Williams (eds), *Essays in Honour of E.H. Carr*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 229–54 at pp. 235–36.
 - 35 Barbagli, Marzio (1982), *Educating for Unemployment. Politics, Labor Markets, and the School System – Italy, 1859–1973*, trans. Robert H. Ross, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 75.
 - 36 Florinsky (1931), quoted in Johnson, William H.E. (1950), *Russia's Educational Heritage*, Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, p. 197.
 - 37 Pankratova, Anna M. (1935), *Istoriya proletariata SSSR*, Moscow, p. 168. Not all these literate workers will have learned reading in 'normal' schools. Many of them probably had lessons in factory schools, with the clergy or during military service.
 - 38 The following two contradictory quotes, from the Italian debate about 1840, may be considered typical:

Il vero amico del popolo, a periodical of the papal state, wrote in 1843: 'If likewise one diffused education in minute proportions, it would inevitably happen that the people would lose their primitive ingenuity and simplicity, they would become estranged from their traditions, and they would no longer love the force of authority above all else; it is of little use to teach the people to read and write, and it can bring grievous results.'

- A memorandum addressed to the Grand Duke of Tuscany declared in 1838: 'Where there is more education for the masses, the People are better-mannered, they carry out the laws that civil society constitutes and preserves, appreciating their advantages and recognizing the necessity of constraint.' Quotes from Barbagli, *Educating for Unemployment*, pp. 51–52.
- 39 See, for instance, Ozouf, Jacques and Ozouf, Mona (1964), 'Le thème du Patriotisme dans les manuels primaires', *Le Mouvement Social*, 49, October–December, pp. 3–31; Lemmermann, Heinz (1984), *Kriegserziehung im Kaiserreich. Studien zur politischen Funktion von Schule und Schulmusik 1890–1918*, 2 vols, Lilienthal and Bremen: Eres Edition.
 - 40 This can be seen in Italy: Soldani, Simonetta (1983), 'The Conflict between Church and State in Italy on Primary Education in the Period Following Unification', in Willem Frijhoff (ed.), *L'Offre d'Ecole*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, pp. 97–111.
 - 41 See, for instance, Gstettner, Peter (1981), *Die Eroberung des Kindes durch die Wissenschaft. Aus der Geschichte der Disziplinierung*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, esp. pp. 43–89.
 - 42 Hurt, J.S. (1977), 'Drill, Discipline, and the Elementary School Ethos', in Phillip McCann (ed.), *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Methuen, pp. 167–91 at p. 170.
 - 43 Booth, *Life and Labour*, series 3, vol. 4, p. 202. Quoted in Jones, Gareth Stedman (1983), *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832–1982*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 222. Jones, in this connection, refers to the demobilizing, 'deadening effects of elementary education'.
 - 44 Therborn, Göran (1977), 'The Rule of Capital and the Rise of Democracy', *New Left Review*, 103, May–June, pp. 3–41 at pp. 30–31.
 - 45 Moorhouse, H.F. (1973), 'The Political Incorporation of the British Working Class: An Interpretation', *Sociology*, 7, pp. 341–59 at p. 346.
 - 46 Naturally, I am fully aware of the fact that female suffrage was established much later. However, considering the fact that classes are structured along patriarchal family lines the extent of male suffrage might be considered as a first approximation of working-class involvement in parliamentary processes.
 - 47 Referring to the collapse of the Second International Abendroth wrote: 'Those socialist parties which had not yet become large parties with a considerable period of legal, mass activity behind them thus generally remained antimilitaristic; while the institutionalized mass parties, almost without exception, fell in line with their governments' war policies after the outbreak of the First World War.' Abendroth, Wolfgang (1970), *Sozialgeschichte der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung*, 7th edn, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, p. 83.
 - 48 This distinction has been made in Janowitz, Morris (1964), *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations. An Essay in Comparative Analysis*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 81–82. Janowitz reduces the second aspect to 'the symbolic value of the armed forces for the population as a whole.' However, I will argue that other secondary influences might have been relevant as well.
 - 49 Military sociologists differ in their opinion on the effects of military socialization, but all seem to agree that army life exerts a discernible influence. Compare the views in Treiber, Hubert (1973), *Wie man Soldaten macht. Sozialisation in kasernierter Vergesellschaftung*, Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, and Rothacher, Albrecht (1979–80), 'On the Effects and Noneffects of Military Socialization', *Armed Forces and Society*, 6, pp. 332–34.
 - 50 Some comparative observations on corporal punishment in the German, Austrian and Russian armies can be found in Denikin, Anton I. (1975), *The Career of a Tsarist Officer. Memoirs, 1872–1916*, an annotated translation from the Russian by Margaret Patoski, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 82–83.
 - 51 Denikin, Anton I. (1931), *Staraja Armija*, Paris: n.p., pp. 142–43.

- 52 Cunningham, Hugh (1975), *The Volunteer Force. A Social and Political History 1859–1908*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 103–26.
- 53 Kiernan, Victor G. (1973), 'Conscription and Society in Europe before the War of 1914–1918', in M.R.D. Foot (ed.), *War and Society. Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western 1928–1971*, London: Elek, pp. 141–58 at p. 156.
- 54 Bond, Brian (1986), *War and Society in Europe 1870–1970*, London: Fontana, p. 66.
- 55 One example. Gestrich shows in his monograph on the history of youth culture in the village of Ohmenhausen (Württemberg) how, during the nineteenth century, dislike of the army was replaced by enthusiasm. 'Military service became a matter of honour and an integral part of each age cohort's defining experiences. A man who had not yet been a conscript was not allowed to sing a soldier's song on the street, on pain of "really catching it" from his elders.' Gestrich, Andreas (1986), *Traditionelle Jugendkultur und Industrialisierung. Sozialgeschichte der Jugend in einer ländlichen Arbeitergemeinde Württembergs 1800–1920*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, p. 124.
- 56 Wildman, Allen K. (1980), *The End of the Russian Imperial Army. The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March–April 1917)*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 40–41. Cf. Bond, *War and Society*, p. 68: Russia 'could hardly attempt to introduce the more idealistic "civic" aspects of the nation in arms when these principles had made such little headway in civil society.'
- 57 Whittam, John (1977), *The Politics of the Italian Army 1861–1918*, London: Croom Helm, p. 114, writes about a 'large number of young men, especially in Sicily and the south, who evaded service'. For France see Andréani, Roland (1973), 'L'Antimilitarisme en Languedoc Méditerranéen avant la Première Guerre Mondiale', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 20, pp. 104–23.
- 58 The research in this area is not very well developed. But see, for example, Cordova, Ferdinando (1983), *Democrazia e repressione nell'Italia di fine secolo*, Rome: Bulzoni, Fricke, Dieter (1958), 'Zur Rolle des Militarismus nach innen in Deutschland vor dem ersten Weltkrieg', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 6, pp. 1298–310; Geary, Roger (1985), *Policing Industrial Disputes 1893 to 1985*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 16–25.
- 59 'This sequence may tentatively be explained by the degree to which the introduction of each system represented a break with the liberal ideas concerning the assignment of guilt and responsibility among liberals, groups, and the state. ... The introduction of accident insurance or workmen's compensation constituted the least radical break with liberalism since it could be rationalized by redefining the old idea of liability of individually caused damages. ... Unemployment insurance was usually introduced last because the notion of state support for the "undeserving poor" required the most radical break with liberal and patrimonial principles.' Flora, Peter and Alber, Jens (1981), 'Modernization, Democratization, and the Development of Welfare States in Western Europe', in Peter Flora and Arnold J. Heidenheimer (eds), *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction, pp. 37–80 at pp. 50–52.
- 60 Hatzfeld tried to explain the slowness of French insurance development by referring to the small economic growth rates, which implied that the unemployment problem never became as urgent as it was in the neighbouring countries. Hatzfeld, Henri (1971), *Du paupérisme à la sécurité sociale 1850–1940. Essai sur les origines de la sécurité sociale en France*, Paris: Colin, p. 47.
- 61 Madison, Bernice (1960), 'The Organization of Welfare Service', in Cyril E. Black (ed.), *The Transformation of Russian Society. Aspects of Social Change since 1861*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 515–40 at pp. 520–21.
- 62 The concepts of the heavy- and helping-hand approaches are explored more fully in Schneider, Sandra K. (1982), 'The Sequential Development of Social Programs in Eighteen Welfare States', *Comparative Social Research*, 5, pp. 195–219.

- 63 Quoted from Cliff, Tony (1975), *Lenin*, vol. I, London: Pluto Press, p. 332. Emphasis added.
- 64 Ritter, Gerhard A. (1986), *Social Welfare in Germany and Britain. Origins and Development*, trans. Kim Traynor, Leamington Spa and New York: Berg, pp. 180–81.
- 65 Hatzfeld, *Du Paupérisme*, esp. pp. 190–261; Sellin, Volker (1971), *Die Anfänge staatlicher Sozialreform im liberalen Italien*, Stuttgart: Klett, pp. 138–54.
- 66 Rimlinger, Gaston V. (1971), *Welfare Policy and Industrialization in Europe, America, and Russia*, New York: Wiley, p. 336.
- 67 Simons, Thomas (1977), 'Einführung in das Recht der sozialen Sicherheit von Italien', in Gerhard Igl et al., *Einführung in das Recht der sozialen Sicherheit von Frankreich, Grossbritannien und Italien* [= *Vierteljahresschrift für Sozialrecht*, Beiheft 1], pp. 339–478 at p. 353; Sellin, *Anfänge*, pp. 153–54. On the distrust of British workers see Pelling, Henry (1968), 'The Working Class and the Origins of the Welfare State', in *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*, London: Macmillan, pp. 1–18; on the distrust of French workers see Hatzfeld, *Du Paupérisme*, pp. 185–261.
- 68 Schwarz, Solomon M. (1951), *Labor in the Soviet Union*, New York: Praeger, p. 338. See also Cliff, *Lenin*, pp. 332–37.
- 69 Ritter, *Social Welfare*, p. 79.
- 70 Quote from 1889 in *ibid.*, p. 35.
- 71 A fact already pointed out in Kriegel, Annie (1968), *Le pain et les roses. Jalons pour une histoire des socialismes*, Paris: PUF, p. 129.
- 72 According to Ragin 'a synthetic [comparative] strategy should embody as much of the strict comparative logic of experimental design as possible. This logic is a key feature of case-oriented comparative study. It is apparent in this strategy's concern for combinations of conditions and in its allowance for complex, conjunctural causations. According to the metatheory of this strategy, social causes often modify the effects of other causes, sometimes mutating and transforming their impact. Such causal complexity cannot be captured easily in statistical analyses, especially in additive models.' Ragin, Charles C. (1987), *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 82–83.
- 73 The concept was perhaps for the first time introduced in Senghaas, Dieter (1972), *Aufrüstung durch Rüstungskontrolle. Über den symbolischen Gebrauch von Gewalt*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, pp. 81–86.
- 74 Roth, Guenther (1963), *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany. A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration*, Totowa, NJ: Bedminster Press, pp. 7–8.
- 75 These factors are mentioned in Trotsky, Leon (1975), *My Life. An Attempt at an Autobiography*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 240–41, and in Bieber, Hans-Joachim (1981), *Gewerkschaften in Krieg und Revolution. Arbeiterbewegung, Industrie, Staat und Militär in Deutschland 1914–1920*, vol. I, Hamburg: Christians, pp. 81–82.



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Chapter 4

The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism (1890–1940)¹

Introduction

Revolutionary syndicalism – we use the term in the broadest sense² – incorporated more fully than any other current within the organized workers' movement a vision of the revolutionary power and creative efficacy of self-reliant workers, an insistence on their right to collective self-management and a faith in their capacity to manage their own affairs. Although it never succeeded in displacing the dominant social democratic labour movement, within the workers' experiences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries forces were at work that shaped and forged this distinctive minority tradition, whose vision, advocacy and faith found formal organizational expression in a large number of countries. For all its regional and national variations, syndicalism was an international movement. This chapter offers an analysis of some of the forces that contributed to its rise and decline.³

The organizations and movements discussed in this chapter shared a number of characteristics. First, their supporters expressed attitudes of class warfare and professed revolutionary objectives. Syndicalists saw class interests as ultimately irreconcilable, and class conflict as therefore inescapable. Consequently, while their labour associations aimed at winning short-term improvements for workers within the existing system, they also espoused the long-term goal of overthrowing capitalism and instituting a collectivized system of worker-managed productive property. Second, syndicalists believed that the most effective means to achieve both short- and long-range goals was the collective, direct action of workers, mobilized primarily against the employers on the frontlines of the class struggle, but more generally against the entire sociopolitical system buttressing the capitalist economy. Third, syndicalists insisted that direct action required organizing workers at the point of production, in their capacity *as* workers. They therefore regarded trade unions as the crucial vehicle of struggle, both for immediate and long-term goals. To syndicalists, the working class constituted the force for change, the economic terrain its natural battlefield, direct action its natural weapon, and self-directed labour associations the natural agencies for uniting, marshalling and applying the collective and ultimately revolutionary power of the workers. Attitudes of class warfare, revolutionary objectives, the primacy and autonomy of the workers' economic organizations, advocacy of

direct action and of eventual workers' control of a collectivized economy – these characteristics united virtually all of the organizations discussed in this chapter. When the term 'syndicalism' – usually without the 'revolutionary' prefix, since in English and most non-French languages the noun simply subsumes the adjective – is used in this chapter, it designates a workers' movement or ideology uniting these characteristics.

Despite the shared attributes of the syndicalist movement, a good deal of variety in internal structure existed within the organizations which it comprised. Some associations, such as the German Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union Einheitsorganisation (General Labour Union Unity Organization), which preferred organization by factory committee to that by trade union, as did some Russian syndicalists, were radically decentralist. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the United States, on the other hand, endorsed a centralized structure linking the industrial unions that it favoured. Its *Industrial Worker* declared in January 1913 that the IWW represented 'a higher type of revolutionary labor organization than that proposed by the [European revolutionary] syndicalists'. It added, however, that the Wobblies, as IWW members were sometimes known, were 'more closely allied' internationally with the syndicalists than with any other movement.⁴ But the centralist-decentralist dichotomy can be misleading, on at least two grounds. First, despite the centralist proclivities of an organization like the IWW, decentralists and centralists competed within it. Second, the European revolutionary syndicalists, although federalists, generally endorsed some form of industrial organization or linkage. Syndicalism developed first in France, and syndicalist unions there, while not surrendering their autonomy, were expected to join both a cross-occupational local or departmental union and an industrial federation, and thus to be represented in the two sections of the national organization, the CGT. The first international syndicalist congress in London in September 1913 endorsed industrial unionism, the Spanish CNT moved toward industrial unionism by introducing the *sindicato único* in 1918–19, and even the reluctant FAUD (Frei Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands) in Germany endorsed organization by industry rather than trade in 1927. The leaders of Canada's OBU, it is true, rejected industrial unionism as inferior to 'one big unionism', but many of the OBU's initial members clearly supported it. At any rate, whether centralists or federalists, industrial unionists or not, syndicalists were obviously seeking forms of labour organization that would ensure efficacy of action without surrendering responsiveness to workers.

Did the syndicalist programme of direct action imply a rejection of politics? The question is perhaps best considered in terms of means and ends. The ultimate ends of the syndicalist agenda were undeniably political: the abolition of the capitalist economic and political system, the establishment of a collectivist society structured on labour's economic associations, and the transfer of decision-making and administration to the producers. Regarding means, the syndicalists obviously put direct action by workers uppermost. Many of them rejected the political parties that claimed to speak for the workers, but sought above all to mobilize voters at the polling booth in the interests of electoral politics, with its attendant compromises. Virtually all

syndicalists could agree with Léon Jouhaux, Secretary of the French CGT, who remarked to foreign union leaders of social democratic inclination at an international trade union conference in Paris in 1909: 'Perhaps for you the political organization is a great ship and the economic organization a little boat in its tow. For us, the great ship is the union organization; it is necessary to subordinate political action to trade union action.'⁵ In actual relations with political parties, the response of syndicalists varied considerably. The CGT professed political neutrality in its Charter of Amiens in 1906, which declared political parties to be entirely free to pursue social transformation, but quite independently of the CGT, and declared CGT members to be entirely free to act upon their political convictions, but outside the unions. The Charter served to minimize political dissension in the unions, which were to focus attention exclusively on the economic struggle. CGT delegates endorsed it overwhelmingly, including those who were themselves political socialists. But in practice the lines were never quite this clear. Did freedom to act on one's political views outside the unions, for example, extend beyond members to officials of the politically neutral CGT? A few such administrators had been elected as socialists to the Chamber of Deputies. A rule change in 1911 prevented CGT officials from running for political office. The journals of the CGT and the pronouncements of some of its highest officials, moreover, were frequently more critical and dismissive of political parties than the neutrality of the Charter of Amiens would suggest.

Opposition to political parties, however, should not be taken as a defining characteristic of syndicalism. When many syndicalists dismissed 'political' action they were basically rejecting or minimizing what they saw as the dead-end of electoral and parliamentary politics. Frank Little, an organizer and ultimately a martyr of the IWW, summed up this attitude when he asserted that workers could never achieve their goals 'through a pure and simple political ballot party We can never do it as long as we depend upon going out and sticking a piece of white paper into a capitalist ballot box.'⁶ But some political socialists agreed. Charles Kerr, Socialist Party member and publisher of the Chicago-based *International Socialist Review*, expressed the same view in 1910: 'Something more than voting is needed to overthrow capitalism, and revolutionary unionism is the something more.'⁷ In short, collaboration was not necessarily ruled out between syndicalists and political socialists and parties that themselves rejected parliamentarism. Members of the Socialist Party of Canada, which repudiated electoral politics, were among the chief activists of the OBU. In Germany following the First World War, syndicalist organizations were willing to work with ultra-left parties that spurned parliamentarism. And syndicalist organizations nearly everywhere fervently supported communist internationalism in its infancy, until it became clear that the Comintern insisted upon parliamentarism and the subordination of revolutionary unions to communist parties, whereupon most of them broke with Moscow.

Table 4.1 briefly surveys the organizations discussed in this chapter, and indicates the period of their greatest influence. It clearly demonstrates that the significant life span of syndicalism, viewed internationally, fell between 1900

Table 4.1 The rise and fall of syndicalist organizations

Organization/country	Founding year	Period of maximum influence*	Later development
Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat (NAS), Netherlands	1893	c. 1920	Dissolved by Nazi occupation, 1940
Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), France	1902**	c. 1911	By 1914 no longer syndicalist
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), United States	1905	1916–17	Marginalized
Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (SAC), Sweden	1910	1924–34	Marginalized; since 1954 cooperation with the state
'Labour Unrest' (Great Britain)	1910	1910–14	Mostly not institutionalized
Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), Spain	1911	1936–37	Suppressed by Franco regime; marginalized and split
Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI), Italy	1912	c. 1920	Liquidated by fascism
Casa del Obrero Mundial (Mexico)	1914	1914–16	Repressed and marginalized
Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA IX), Argentina	1915	1915–20	Absorbed by Union Sindical Argentina, 1922
One Big Union (OBU), Canada	1919	1919–20	Marginalized; absorbed by All-Canadian Congress of Labour, 1956
Confederação Geral do Trabalho (CGT), Portugal	1919	1919–20	Suppressed by Salazar-regime
Arbeiterunionen, Germany***	1920–21	1922–24	Marginalized; destroyed by Nazi-regime

Notes:

* Despite the often indifferent administration of syndicalist unions and the fact that many workers regarded themselves as members without paying dues, we have usually used the number of members (as the firmest measure we have) as determining the period of maximum influence.

** We chose the year that the CGT (actually founded in 1895) merged with the Bourses du Travail (Chambers of Labour).

*** A forerunner, the Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften (Free Association of German Unions), founded in 1897, became syndicalist before 1914.

and 1940, which is also true of syndicalist organizations not discussed here, such as the Federación Obrera Regional Uruguay (Uruguayan Regional Workers' Federation), the Chilean IWW, the Norske Fagopposition (Norwegian Trade Union Opposition), the All-Russian Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists, and the Australian Wobblies.⁸ The table further suggests that syndicalism experienced its greatest vitality in the period immediately preceding and following the First World War – from about 1910 into the early 1920s – with only the movements in Sweden and Spain peaking later.

It is noteworthy, and by no means coincidental, that syndicalism emerged during the period of what is known as the second industrial revolution. The introduction of new sources of power, particularly the diffusion of electrical power and the internal combustion engine, shifts in the relative importance of existing industries and the emergence of new ones, particularly widespread technological innovation, altered the nature of the economy and its industrial processes, and consequently the nature of working and living conditions. Although a phenomenon as complex and diffuse as the second industrial revolution can only be approximately dated, scholars agree that it began in the late nineteenth century (the year 1890 is frequently cited). The period in which its effects spread and deepened was therefore also that of the gestation and birth of syndicalism.⁹

To the complicated question why syndicalist movements arose in so many places during this particular period of economic development, only a tentative answer can be offered. We think that an explanation must include at least five interdependent factors: the transformation of labour processes and labour relations; workers' dissatisfaction with the dominant labour strategy; the practical possibility of general strikes; spatial or geographic influences; and the growth of a radical mood within the working class.

Growing Radicalization

The growth of a radical mood among workers is obviously explicable only by a convergence of factors, among which the influences listed immediately above and discussed in greater detail below were conspicuous contributors. The matrix of contributing factors and the corresponding radical temperament, moreover, always took distinctive colouration from varying occupational, regional and national conditions. That a notable proportion of workers were in an increasingly radical mood, however, is clear. The proliferation of a series of avowedly revolutionary syndicalist labour organizations is itself an indicator, albeit an imperfect one, of this rebellious temper. We begin by drawing attention to the growth of a radical mood among workers both to cite potential contributing factors beyond those we discuss below, and to emphasize that the emergence of syndicalism was only part of a wider upsurge in workers' militancy around the period of the First World War. The factors discussed separately below, then, contributed to heightening workers' radicalism generally, but also help to explain why some of this radicalism was funnelled into the syndicalist movement.

Whatever its specific contributions, the war itself clearly provides an insufficient explanation of this widespread workers' unrest and radicalization, since a conspicuous international clustering of very militant, partially revolutionary workers' struggles occurred in the period 1910–20, therefore pre-dating the war. Perhaps the most reliable measure of workers' unrest is participation in strikes, and an extraordinary international upsurge in strike action (measured by frequency of strikes, number of strikers and working days lost) occurred during the decade beginning in 1910, with the war itself interrupting the pattern, but seemingly only to delay and to reinforce it.¹⁰

In his study of long-term strike patterns, Ernesto Screpanti sees in the period 1910–20 a seismic upheaval comparable only to the great international strike waves of the periods 1869–75 and 1968–74.¹¹ Screpanti, moreover, limits his analysis to data drawn from France, Germany, Italy, Britain and the USA. That is, he does not take into account suggestive evidence from elsewhere, such as the Scandinavian strike wave between 1909 and the mid-1920s, Russia, convulsed by workers' unrest in 1917, Argentina, which witnessed dramatic strike action in 1919, or Mexico, where in 1915–16 syndicalist workers' organizations mounted a challenge to the existing order, which was unprecedented in the Americas and has been unparalleled since.

Clearly, in the two or three decades before the First World War, a potential explosion was building, fashioned by the factors discussed below and others of the period, such as the unprecedented urbanization of the working class. Workers became progressively concentrated in Europe and to some extent in the Americas, in cities as distant as Kristiania and Buenos Aires, in increasingly segregated, homogeneous neighbourhoods, which often served to heighten class-consciousness and to foster solidarity. Another feature of the period was a successful accumulation of capital that far outstripped workers' collective gains. Indeed, the general picture, beneath an inevitable degree of national and occupational variation in income patterns, appears to be one not simply of 'relative deprivation' for labour, but of widespread (but not general) stagnation or decrease of real wages after the turn of the century, and especially after about 1910.¹² The convergence of these and related factors to be discussed below resulted in a broad-based radicalization during the final pre-war years that was transformed, in many countries towards the end of the war, into a revolutionary or semi-revolutionary situation. The spread of syndicalist attitudes and organizations was by no means identical with this upsurge of workers' militancy, which took many forms of expression, but it is inexplicable without it and is certainly one of its most distinctive manifestations. Certain developments in labour processes and in labour relations not only contributed notably to the rise of workers' radicalism, but also served to enhance the appeal of syndicalism.

Labour Processes and Labour Relations

Two categories of workers were strongly represented in the occupational composition of syndicalist movements. To the first category belonged casual, seasonal or project labourers, whose working lives were characterized by forms of discontinuity – by episodic work periods, by frequent changes of employer and often by changes in work site and sometimes geographic locale as well. Agricultural workers, construction workers, dockers and gasworkers are representative of groups in the first category.

Agricultural workers were conspicuous in some syndicalist organizations. Landless agricultural workers in Italy – the *braccianti* in Emilia-Romagna in the centre, for example, or the *giornatari* in Apulia in the South – formed an important hard core of syndicalism. These landless labourers, hired daily in early

morning labour markets, lacked stable bonds with any particular *padrone*. Working for a variety of employers extended contacts between such workers, fostering an identification of mutual interests and a perception of the possibilities of joint action. A similar description could apply to the landless day labourers in the Portuguese Alentejo, to those in Andalusia in Spain, to the harvest workers in the American grain belt, or to the grape gatherers in southeastern France.¹³

Construction workers and dockers were very prominent in the syndicalist movement. Workers in the building trades constituted a notably militant federation in the French CGT and played an important role in many other syndicalist organizations, including those in Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Britain and Portugal. Their numbers grew alongside the rapid urbanization process. At the same time, labour relations in the industry were being altered in the new century, particularly by increasing commercialization, or speculative construction which was accompanied by the proliferation of competitive general contractors and subcontractors. A typical feature of the new situation was that masons, painters and other construction workers were contracted for each new building site and were therefore increasingly reduced to conditions akin to those of casual workers. Job control was further threatened by the willingness of contractors to shift from skilled to unskilled labour when possible, or to employ non-union workers. Strikes against non-union labour were common in the construction trades.¹⁴ Dockers were also important in the syndicalist movement in many places, such as San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Hull or Amsterdam. Their jobs were of a very short duration. 'In no other industry', Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside write in their study of casual labour, 'were the typical engagements so brief.'¹⁵ The men were taken on to load or unload a single ship and were therefore unemployed again the moment they had finished the job.¹⁶

These and similar types of worker¹⁷ shared certain characteristics that help to explain their support for syndicalism. First, they frequently changed jobs and were rarely tied to a single type of employment. When demand in a particular occupation declined, at the end of a specific project or more commonly at the end of the season, they would look for other types of work (although for agricultural workers alternatives were frequently limited). Such interchanges were common between the construction industry and dock work. Reporting in 1916 on his investigation of labour on the London docks, where demand was typically heavy in December, January and July, but much less so in late summer, H.A. Mess noted examples of casual labour crossing job boundaries: 'Builders' men come to the docks in winter when their own trade is slack. Gasworkers are available in July. ... On the other hand many dockers go hopping or harvesting in August and September.'¹⁸ Such periodic transoccupational migration naturally stimulated attempts to set up labour organizations encompassing more than one trade. Second, since such workers were characteristically not bound to a single, long-term employer, they were free of the informal restraints accompanying a client-patron relationship. This meant that although they were clearly dependent on the job, they had less to lose by striking as their frequent changes in their places of work led them to be less afraid of dismissal than those with a semi-permanent employer.¹⁹ Third,

when grievances arose on such jobs the constraints of time were very limiting; to achieve anything, workers were forced to act immediately, before a particular harvest, construction project or work assignment was completed. There was no opportunity for long-term planning of resistance or for building up a strike fund or a powerful trade union organization, or for engaging in time-consuming processes of mediation or arbitration. Such working conditions naturally encouraged tactics of immediate economic action against the employer. The appeal of the syndicalist 'direct action' programme to such seasonal, casual or project workers is obvious.

The second category of workers prominent in syndicalist organizations included miners, railway workers, and factory workers, whose working conditions were being restructured as the effects of the second industrial revolution expanded and multiplied in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A host of technical and organizational changes threatened painstakingly acquired occupational skills, altered the conditions of work and intensified its demands. In 1910 the US Immigration Commission recorded its view that the absorption of a large mass of unskilled, agrarian immigrants from eastern and Southern Europe 'has been made possible only by the invention of mechanical devices and processes which have eliminated the skill and experience formerly required in a large number of occupations'.²⁰ The Commission cited examples from the mining industry, and textile, glass and steel production. Workers in the first category, of course, were not immune to the effects of technological change during this period. In the building trades, for instance, carpenters were challenged by such innovations as prefabricated wood units and mechanical saws, while the need for the skills of the stonemasons declined as the use of iron and concrete and of mechanized devices for working stone spread. The process of deskilling and the increased demands of work as a result of economic change and technological innovation were, however, particularly conspicuous among the second category of workers, who were often radicalized by it, and from whom syndicalism frequently drew support. Thus, for example, craft skills were no longer essential in the steel industry after continuous flow methods of production were introduced. In Britain in May 1911 *The Industrial Syndicalist*, observing that the rail companies were 'using automatic appliances for doing away with signalmen, and others, and when once the railways are electrified, automatic processes are likely to be much more extensively used', announced the founding of a new newspaper, *The Syndicalist Railwayman*. Mechanical undercutting, to cite but one example from the mining industry, had begun to replace pick mining. Melvyn Dubofsky's comments on the western USA in the late nineteenth century, in his history of the IWW, could be extended with little change to many mining communities elsewhere:

Technological innovations increased productivity but in so doing diluted the importance of traditional skills and disrupted established patterns of work. [They ...] tended to reduce some formerly skilled workers to unskilled positions with lower earning potential. ... [All] Western mining communities experienced similar pressures on piece rates, job categories, and established skills.²¹

Furthermore, as Sanford Jacoby has noted in his study of the transformation of work in the United States, the extensive introduction of technical changes that minimized the need for skills, and the accompanying standardization of equipment, facilitated the ease with which relatively untrained workers could move across shops and factories from one easily-learned job to another.²² As a result of such changes, the working conditions of skilled and semi-skilled workers in these sectors began, on the surface, to resemble those of the casual workers discussed above. This tendency was observed long ago. A University of Chicago authority on vocational education, Paul H. Douglas, wrote in 1921:

The very process of machinery which made work more specialized, made the worker less specialized. He was now transferable. The working history of the typical artisan illustrates this. He moves from shoe factory to cotton mill, from cotton mill to machine shop, and so on. A machine-tender who has learned the general principle of caring for a machine can tend ribbon-weaving machinery as well as shoemaking. He is really an interchangeable part in the industrial mechanism.²³

Such mobility obviously militated against craft isolation and craft identification by workers, facilitating, instead, a more catholic view of labour's interests and challenges. 'It is in the ranks of this floating mass of labor which transfers from one industry to another', Douglas added, 'that the theories of syndicalism have found their chief support'.²⁴

The fundamental technical restructuring of the workforce and the decline in potential job control that accompanied the dilution of skilled labour was a long-term trend, which the First World War rapidly accelerated. This was especially notable in the metal and munition industries, which is one reason why, from 1916–17 onwards, the metalworkers, 'hitherto rather conservative', in Eric Hobsbawm's words, 'became in most countries of the world the characteristic leaders of militant labour organisations'.²⁵

In addition to changes of a technical nature, innovations were also introduced in the organization of work. The two sets of changes were not always simultaneous, nor were the new forms of work organization simply attributable to technical change, but owed more to the employers' desire to extend control over the work process. In other words, technological innovation did not dictate specific forms of work organization, but – largely by diluting skills – it facilitated changes in certain directions by enabling employers to circumscribe the collective role of workers in production. For example, new management techniques were introduced, which resulted in the replacement of systems of internal contract and indirect employment whereby skilled workers hired, paid and supervised their own assistants, or team leaders contracted with the overarching employer but assembled, monitored and paid their own teams, by direct employment and bureaucratic control. Once conspicuous in textile and metal production, mining and shipbuilding, but also common in other industries, internal contracting, a form of co-management by labour and capital, was clearly ebbing by the turn of the century in Europe and North America. In addition to increasing direct supervision, employers experimented with various means, such as piecework, premium bonuses, internal promotion and job ladders, to elicit greater worker effort, docility and loyalty.²⁶

Despite considerable variation from country to country and from industry to industry, a common feature of the new managerial procedures was the consolidation of control over the work process, which involved transferring production expertise from workers to the employers, and which inevitably drew resistance. Craig R. Littler observes that, in Britain by the end of the nineteenth century, 'new ideas, new methods, and new technology influenced many employers to reach down for more control over the shopfloor'. Prior to 1914, he adds, 'there was a widespread change to a directly-employed and directly-controlled labour force, but this provided no impetus for more secure job systems. On the contrary, as far as one can determine, casualism increased'.²⁷

In the USA, according to Department of Commerce figures, the proportion of foremen to workers in the manufacturing sector increased strikingly: by 15 per cent from 1900 to 1910, and by 35 per cent from 1910 to 1920. This period saw the rapid expansion of the mass production industries in the USA. As William H. Lazonick writes:

... successful systematic management did not simply entail the standardisation, speed-up, and co-ordination of the flow of capital inputs; it also meant the standardisation, speed-up, and control of workers. The craft skill and judgement of the worker had to be as much as possible superseded as did the control of workers over the pace of work.²⁸

The frustration of workers found expression in informal and formal forms of resistance, in 'high turnover, absenteeism, restriction of output, and the growth of radical unionism'.²⁹ Flemming Mikkelsen notes that the largest strikes in Scandinavia in the 15 years before 1914 were far less likely to involve issues of wages than 'the right to direct and distribute work'.³⁰ France experienced what Michael P. Hanagan calls 'an industrial war' in the quarter-century before the First World War, when syndicalism emerged there. 'In shops and factories throughout the country a tremendous struggle raged over the control of the production process. Everywhere employers strove to seize control on the shop floor and acquire a monopoly of expertise over the manufacturing process; everywhere skilled workers resisted these attempts.'³¹

These changes in technology and the organization of work led to a decline in the influence of craft unionism, sometimes prompted artisanal workers to ally with industrial workers, and acted as a powerful stimulus for a unionism designed to unite and mobilize all the workers in a particular industry.

In many countries the period 1900–40 saw the introduction of collective bargaining – a means of institutionalizing class antagonism. A number of significant consequences followed. First, the trade unions became co-responsible for disciplining the workers during the contract period. Second, union officials started to take up a buffer position between capitalists and workers, which, by a process of goal displacement, made them more conservative. Third, the pattern of nominal wages was fixed for a set period, sometimes several years, which, depending on the state of the economy, could work for or against the workers. Fourth, even urgent workers' demands could now only be made

the object of struggle – barring violation of the agreements – after a long delay. Although collective agreements were becoming a permanent feature of labour relations, for some sections of the working class there seemed to be more disadvantages than advantages attached to the practice, notably during periods of ‘relative deprivation’.³²

Rejection of the Dominant Labour Strategy

Some workers were drawn to the syndicalist emphasis on direct industrial action and sought to pursue their short- and long-term objectives through revolutionary unions as a clear alternative to the dominant labour strategy represented by socialist and labour parties and reformist trade unions. By the decade preceding the First World War they had had the opportunity to witness the efforts of such parties and unions on behalf of labour and had found them wanting.

Socialist parties of varying significance had been established throughout Europe and the Americas long before the turn of the century. The record of some of these parties had not been impressive. In some countries the general movement of political socialism had been erratic and uneven, sometimes divided and conflict-ridden. The desire to escape from time- and energy-consuming squabbles between socialist groupings was one factor prompting some radical labour organizations, such as the Dutch NAS and the IWW in the USA, to declare their independence of political parties. In France, many unions had early adopted the policy of political neutrality against an originally divided and ineffective socialist movement, in large part to keep political dissension from undermining the unions and to keep at bay the fractious socialist factions that demonstrated such obvious interest in capturing them. Special conditions prevailed in some cases, as in pre-war Argentina, where immigrant workers, barred from voting, dominated the organized labour movement.

But countries such as Italy and Germany could boast large and visible pre-war workers’ parties with long and impressive histories. The Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD – German Social Democratic Party), the largest party in Germany from 1912, held pride of place among them. But even where workers’ parties had expanded significantly, in the eyes of many militants their growth had not brought gains commensurate with the efforts that the working class had invested in them. Some dissidents argued that the numerical growth of the party did not correlate with real advances in the class struggle, which seemed to have been subordinated to an undue concern with internal party organization, electioneering and parliamentary procedures. To some, the parties appeared to have lost their original revolutionary impetus and intent, to have become preoccupied with consolidating and expanding their position within the existing sociopolitical system, rather than seeking more fundamental transformation.

Examples abound of the growing impatience of radical activists with workers’ parties, with whom they sometimes broke to found syndicalist

organizations. Syndicalists in southern Italy dismissed the pre-war policies of the socialist party as 'monarchist reformism'. Syndicalism in Apulia, in Frank M. Snowden's words, 'entailed a rejection of the bureaucratization and lack of internal democracy' of the party, 'of the parliamentary path to socialism, and of the strategy of collaboration with [Premier] Giovanni Giolitti, whom the Apulians called a "mafia boss"'.³³ In pre-war Norway a direct-actionist opposition group emerged – strongly supported, incidentally, by construction workers and miners – which, according to Sten Sparre Nilson, rejected 'the established leaders of the Labor Party, whose patient endeavors to influence Parliament and municipal bodies were assailed as being much too slow and ineffectual'.³⁴ In Britain, the wholly reform-minded Labour Party had emerged only at the beginning of the century. Although it grew gradually, even during the labour unrest preceding the war, many activists hoped for far greater benefits from the policy of amalgamating and revolutionizing existing unions than from the Labour Party's parliamentary activities. 'The oldest member of the editorial staff remembered people talking about a Labour Party several years ago', the militant *Daily Herald* scoffed in 1913. Regarding a five-shilling fee to the upcoming party conference, the *Herald* added: 'No Trade Unionist will get the value of sixty pence out of the Labour Party. It would be a thoroughly bad investment.'³⁵ In Sweden, Gustav Sjöström, the editor of the SAC's *Syndikalisten*, commending the international spread of syndicalism, defended its trade union-based, direct-action principles, which the 'toothless, political, social-democratic old market women have sought to falsify for the sake of their own worthless wares'.³⁶

Existing reformist trade unions, frequently allied with the workers' parties, were also heavily criticized for not representing workers' interests more effectively. The disaffected sometimes indicted them for lending the stamp of approval, officially or unofficially, to the electoral undertakings of the parties, often for not prosecuting the class war more directly and vigorously as labour unions, and frequently for subordinating the interests of the wider working class to organized craft or sectional interests within it. Critics argued that even the impressive numerical expansion achieved by some unions hindered class warfare if it was accompanied by the expansion of an administratively- and cautiously-minded officialdom, a stultifying centralization, that counteracted revolutionary initiatives from below. Judged by size and administrative accoutrements the German 'free unions', aligned with the SPD, were the most successful in Europe. Between 1902 and 1913 their membership increased by nearly 350 per cent. During the same period their bureaucracy expanded by over 1900 per cent. 'In any search for the increasing conservatism of the free trade unions', historian Gary Steenson observes, 'these figures play an important part. For most of this bureaucracy the movement was everything, the end nothing.'³⁷ The independently organized syndicalists in pre-1914 Germany, vocal foes of the free unions, were miniscule alongside their social democratic rivals. A more serious threat came from within: criticism of the moderation of officialdom mounted prior to the war, and syndicalism appeared to present a viable alternative to bureaucratic immobility in the post-war crisis of German unionism.

Everywhere the established, reformist unions faced similar charges. From the turn of the century onwards, they were increasingly condemned as stagnant, as crippled by bureaucratic inertia, as enmeshed by the short-term preoccupations of business unionism – the *Magenfrage*, or ‘stomach question’, as Germans critics called it, or ‘pork-chop unionism’ as American Wobblies dismissed it – and as too timid to risk carefully constructed union structures or carefully collected treasuries. The emerging syndicalist unions, by contrast, frequently made a virtue (sometimes a virtue of necessity) of loosely organized, minimally structured unions that spurned entrenched bureaucracies and large war chests as inherently conservatizing. In some cases, reformist unions were criticized as being too closely identified through collective bargaining procedures with the employers and through arbitration and welfare schemes with the state. In other cases, they were criticized as insensitive or hostile to the dissent and initiatives of the rank and file within, and to the needs of unorganized workers outside them. Although the syndicalists of the French CGT urged their foreign counterparts to revolutionize existing reformist unions outside France, many militants saw this as impossible. Writing in the CGT journal *La Vie Ouvrière* in April 1913, for example, a noted Belgian syndicalist, L. Wolter, argued that the French had no appreciation of the tasks of agitating in the large, hostile social democratic unions of Germany and Belgium, within which the unionists’ ‘educational needs were thwarted’ and freedom of thought was ‘systematically stifled’.³⁸ Everywhere, reformist unions confronted members within and critics outside who sought to convert them to bolder, more militant action. Such dissidents sometimes came to advocate abandoning the unions or splitting them in the search for a more audacious policy.

The discontent of rank-and-file unionists, however, was obviously not synonymous with syndicalism, although the equation was often mistakenly made. During the conspicuous labour unrest in pre-war Britain, the press almost indiscriminately identified any defiance by unionists of their trade union leaders as a sign of syndicalism. Such challenges, in Britain or elsewhere, were in fact symptomatic of a widespread workers’ radicalization coming into conflict with the constraints of current union organization and practice, rather than of syndicalism *tout court*. In many cases, existing unions succeeded in containing such discontent within their boundaries – sometimes neutralizing it, sometimes merely deferring it – without fundamentally altering the organization; in some cases, existing unions were brought to endorse syndicalist principles; in yet others, discontent breached the boundaries and new, revolutionary unions were founded.

The General Strike

Before syndicalism could emerge as an international phenomenon, its direct action programme had to be perceived as a viable alternative strategy to the dominant labour policies of electoral politics and reformist unionism. The idea of the collective suspension of labour as a tool of the toiling classes can be traced back to the eighteenth century, and was pondered in France and

England during the period of the French Revolution. It received more serious discussion in England in the guise of William Benbow's 'National Holiday' in the 1830s, and the Chartists endorsed it. The Bakuninists on the Continent later contemplated a collective work stoppage as a 'Sacred Month'. But the general strike became a practical possibility only in the 1890s. To convert the idea of such a strike into a realistic weapon, two qualitative changes were necessary. First, the economy needed to become sufficiently dependent on wage labour – that is, the modern working class had to become such an indispensable social force that any long-term strike carried out by a mass of workers would vitally affect the social order. Second and relatedly, workers needed to have achieved a sufficient degree of organization and solidarity, at least in basic sectors of the economy, to make a widespread cessation of work feasible. This occurred in most of the developed capitalist countries between about 1870 and 1900.³⁹ Only these underlying factors made possible, and make explicable, the series of 'general' and 'political' strikes, of varying degrees of success, that took place in the years preceding the First World War – for example, in Belgium in 1893 and 1902, in Sweden in 1902 and 1909, in the Netherlands in 1903, and in Italy in 1904. The significant role of work stoppages in the Russian Revolution of 1905, moreover, inspired direct actionists elsewhere and fuelled the debate on the mass strike in the European labour movement.

Spatial and Geographical Influences

A survey of syndicalism as an international phenomenon suggests that spatial factors influenced the diffusion of its attitudes and practices. The case of France illustrates the 'radiation effect', whereby the dominant workers' attitudes in a locale or region sometimes overcome countervailing influences to penetrate those to whom it would ordinarily be alien. The typical adherence to syndicalism by employees in the series of small firms that dominated the manufacturing topography of pre-war Paris, for example, fostered a syndicalist orientation among workers in a number of large firms as well, while reformism in northern France was so strong, on the other hand, that groups of workers who were typically radical, such as the construction workers, adopted a reformist outlook there. H.B. Wiardi Beckman, a student of the French movement, had in mind the influence of such factors on radicalism when he argued that 'the whole economic environment in which the worker lives, helps to determine the direction of his thoughts'.⁴⁰

Aside from this radiation effect, regional contradictions also played a role. In the rawboned Canadian and American West – where exploitation frequently appeared more tangible, employers more defiant, and the alliance of government and capital more visible than elsewhere in those countries – labour conditions acted both to radicalize workers and to drive a wedge between them and the reform-minded, craft-oriented union movements in the East, whose leaders were at best ignorant of the working conditions of Western workers and insensitive or indifferent to their needs, at worst hostile to their

initiatives. The birth of the western-based OBU in Canada certainly owed a good deal to regional contradictions, and its pioneers even saw some virtue in their distance from the older unions in the East. Western workers would take the lead in revolutionary unionism, the *OBU Bulletin* observed in May 1919, for they were 'not so heavily hampered by Officialdom as our Eastern Brothers'.⁴¹ In the United States, the efforts of the radical Western Federation of Miners and its offspring, the American Labor Union, to unionize workers long neglected by the eastern-based union movement drew a hostile offensive from the American Federation of Labor (AFL), even before the IWW was founded as the heir to western radicalism and the adversary of the AFL. In Italy, the increasingly moderate socialist party and the reformist unions of the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* (CGL – General Confederation of Labour) had concentrated on piecemeal gains for northern workers. The systematic neglect of the agrarian South alienated southern militants, in whose view the party 'had fundamentally betrayed the revolutionary cause and the rights of southerners'. In their eyes, Frank M. Snowden observes, 'the party had become not a vehicle for fundamental change but a pressure group winning concessions on behalf of a no[r]thern working-class elite'.⁴² The southern unionists brought their organizations under the umbrella of the syndicalist USI rather than the reformist CGL.

Syndicalism's Success and Decline

The relative success of syndicalist movements was at least partly determined by the general level of class struggle. Its spokesmen and activists intended syndicalism – '*syndicalisme révolutionnaire*' in the country from which the term derives – to be a revolutionary current within the labour movement. The historical record suggests, however, that in comparison to their reformist counterparts, revolutionary movements remain small during periods of relative stability. This implies that, in non-revolutionary situations, pure syndicalist movements will remain a minority within organized labour and, correspondingly, that such movements can achieve hegemony within the working class only if a revolutionary situation exists. This in turn entails, among other things, an analysis of the French CGT before 1914 as something less than a revolutionary movement. It suggests, for example, that the CGT's programme had little to do with the daily lives of most of its members, in the same fashion that the revolutionary Erfurt programme did not reflect the everyday practice of the German SPD. On this reading it becomes clear how, following the unsuccessful strike for the eight-hour day in 1906, the CGT, despite its revolutionary rhetoric, could increasingly become preoccupied with reformist practice and could readily cooperate with its bourgeois adversaries and the state in the *Union Sacrée* only a few years later. This conclusion regarding the French movement has been put by a number of commentators, notably and perhaps too emphatically by Peter Stearns.⁴³ On this reading it is also not surprising that the Argentinian FORA IX was not notably revolutionary in practice.

The picture in countries where syndicalism had to hold its own against other trade unions during non-revolutionary periods corroborates this observation. Thus, the membership of the IWW was never more than a few per cent of that of the AFL, and the same can be said of the German FAUD vis-à-vis the 'free unions'; at its peak in 1920 the membership of the NAS stood at one-fifth of that of the social democratic *Nederlandsch Verbond van Vakverenigingen* (NVV – Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions), and there were large Christian unions in the Netherlands as well; and, at its acme in 1924, the membership of the Swedish SAC stood at about one-tenth of that of the social democratic *Landsorganisation* (Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions). The fact that the revolutionary Casa was hegemonic in Mexico in 1914–16, and that in the 1930s the CNT was the equal of the socialist-linked trade union organization in Spain, also supports this contention, since both situations were clearly revolutionary.

Why did syndicalist movements decline? One of the most conspicuous and immediate causes was state repression. Authoritarian governments in the West destroyed five of the movements discussed here (in Italy, Portugal, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands) – just as the Bolshevik government had already destroyed the Russian movement – and two additional movements (in the USA and Mexico) were significantly weakened by state persecution. In itself, however, this does not explain the enduring absence of significant syndicalist movements in these countries. Why, for instance, were the heirs of the CNT incapable of recovering lost ground in the later 1970s, after the end of the Franco dictatorship? More basic underlying causes are apparently at work here.

A more fundamental explanation of the disappearance of syndicalism as a mass movement must invoke not simply temporary factors like state repression, but also changes in capitalist society itself. It is obvious that the revolutions of the twentieth century all took place in pre-industrial or industrializing countries, and never in fully developed capitalist societies. Some may consider this a coincidence, but the systematic non-arrival of working-class revolutions from below suggests a structural reason. Some scholars consider the main cause to be the evolution of the benefits of the interventionist state, or as Richard Löwenthal puts it, 'the enormous increase in the importance of the [collectively useful] functions, and therefore of the functioning, of public administration in the daily life of the people'.⁴⁴ In addition to the welfare state there are the integrating effects of advanced capitalist relations of production and consumption (sometimes misleadingly called 'Fordist') whereby working-class families not only produce and reproduce labour power for sale, but operate simultaneously as units of individualized mass consumption, purchasing many of the consumer goods they produce within a system that permits capital to expand and workers' material standards of living to improve.

The rise of the welfare state and the conditions of long-term integration of labour in advanced capitalist economies left those syndicalist movements not already destroyed by state repression with only three options, each of which would ultimately mean their demise. A movement could:

- 1 hold on to its principles, in which case it would inevitably become totally marginalized;
- 2 change course fundamentally and adapt to the new conditions, in which case it would have to abandon its syndicalist principles; or,
- 3 if these two alternatives were unpalatable, disband, or what comes to the same thing, merge into a non-syndicalist trade-union organization.

The IWW, which still survives, opted for the first alternative. The French CGT, which in any case had never been purely revolutionary, opted for the second. Other movements opted sooner or later for the third.

The case of the Swedish SAC is illuminating in this respect. The SAC initially opted for the first alternative, but as marginalization threatened to become total, it changed course and opted for the second. Beginning in the 1930s, unemployment benefits in Sweden were paid by the trade unions out of special funds to which the state also made major contributions. The SAC initially refused to participate in this scheme, but increasing numbers of members left it for the social democratic LO (*Lands organisationen*). The SAC was succumbing to attrition. Evert Arvidsson has recorded that the view gradually spread in the SAC that its survival depended on setting up an employment insurance fund of its own.

A resolution to this effect was passed at the SAC congress of 1952, and a detailed study of the matter was initiated. The [social democratic] government proved more accommodating than expected. The negotiations resulted in an agreement which provided not only for the setting up of an insurance fund with the usual state contribution (of around 55 percent), but also for a special donation to the fund from the government. This original capital was set at 337,720 kroner, which for a small organization like the SAC was a sizeable sum. (It should also be pointed out that the larger unions within the social-democratic LO federation often started their insurance funds with capital contributions of their own.)⁴⁵

After some hesitation the SAC decided to accept the offer, and 'under these new conditions, SAC membership, which had been falling for twenty years, began to show a slow rise'.⁴⁶ It is hard to imagine a more poignant example of the assimilative power of the capitalist welfare state.

The problem of collective bargaining foreshadowed the difficulty of maintaining syndicalist principles in developed capitalist societies. Many organizations within the international syndicalist movement initially repudiated collective agreements with employers on the grounds that, by a collaborative sharing of responsibility for work discipline, such agreements would expand bureaucratism within the unions, undermine revolutionary spirit and restrict the freedom of action that workers should always maintain against the class enemy. From an early date, however, sometimes after a period of suspicion and resistance, many workers gave up this position. In the early decades of the century it became clear that to maintain or gain a mass membership, syndicalist unions had to accept collective bargaining. In the Netherlands the NAS decided, reluctantly, to accept the principle in 1909. The Swedish SAC accepted collective agreements in 1929. The Argentinian

FORA and the Canadian OBU accepted collective agreements from the outset.

The analysis presented here suggests that the decline of syndicalist mass movements is not necessarily final. Although societies with developed capitalist economies and extensive welfare systems have succeeded in defusing and channelling labour unrest and integrating workers, in other societies direct-action principles might still prove attractive to sections of the working class. The rise of Solidarność in Poland in 1980–81 dramatically demonstrated the continuing appeal of direct action to masses of dissident workers. Although not syndicalist *strictu sensu*, Solidarność revived many basic ideas and practices of ‘classical’ syndicalism.

Notes

- 1 Written jointly with Wayne Thorpe.
- 2 The revolutionary, direct-action movements discussed in this chapter can be variously labelled as ‘revolutionary industrialism’, ‘revolutionary unionism’, ‘anarcho-syndicalism’, ‘councilism’ or ‘conciliarism’, or even ‘one big unionism’, and we are well aware that ‘revolutionary syndicalism’ is sometimes reserved to designate one subset among them. But the term ‘syndicalism’ sometimes serves to encompass all revolutionary, direct-action organizations, and it is in this sense that we use it here.
- 3 Earlier works that take a transnational approach are a somewhat dated overview by a participant in the movement, Rocker, Rudolf (1938), *Anarcho-Syndicalism. Theory and Practice*, London: Secker and Warburg; a cross-cultural (mainly France, Italy, USA) comparison, De Clementi, Andreina (1983), *Politica e società nel sindacalismo rivoluzionario 1900–1915*, Rome: Bulzoni; Peterson, Larry (1983), ‘The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, 1900–1925’, in James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (eds), *Work, Community, and Power. The Experience of Labor in Europe and America, 1900–1925*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 49–87; and Schöttler, Peter (1986), ‘Syndikalismus in der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung. Neuere Forschungen in Frankreich, England und Deutschland’, in Klaus Tenfelde (ed.), *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung im Vergleich*, Munich: Oldenbourg, pp. 419–75.
- 4 *Industrial Worker*, 9 January 1913.
- 5 *L’Humanité*, 1 September 1909.
- 6 Dubofsky, Melvyn (1969), *We Shall Be All. A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Chicago: Quadrangle, p. 135.
- 7 *International Socialist Review*, October 1909, p. 360.
- 8 For discussions of a few movements not discussed here, see O’Connor, Emmet (1988), *Syndicalism in Ireland 1917–1923*, Cork: Cork University Press; Olssen, Erik (1988), *The Red Feds. Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908–1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Farrell, Frank (1981), *International Socialism and Australian Labour. The Left in Australia 1919–1939*, Sydney: Hale and Iremonger; Avrich, Paul (1967), *The Russian Anarchists*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; and Simon, Fanny (1946), ‘Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism in South America’, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 26, pp. 38–59.
- 9 The emergence of syndicalism could also be related to another concept offered by economists and historians: the ‘long wave’ theory frequently connected with the name of N.D. Kondratiev, a Russian economist active in the 1920s. The early 1970s witnessed a resurgence of interest in the potential explanatory and predictive

capacity of long wave theory, which postulates a recurring (but not repetitive) pattern of capitalist economic development through periods of expansion and stagnation. Divided by peaks and troughs, the periods within waves need not be of equal duration, but the theory holds that each wave takes approximately 50 years. The dating of long waves varies, but the first Kondratiev wave is frequently set at 1790–1848 (with the downturn at 1810–17), the second at 1848–94 (1866–75), the third at 1894–1945 (1913–20), with the fourth beginning in 1945 (1967–74). Although their intent has not been specifically to explain the emergence of syndicalism, a few authors, such as James E. Cronin, Ernest Mandel and Ernesto Screpanti, have attempted to link patterns of working-class unrest and militancy to long waves. See Cronin, James E. (1980), 'Stages, Cycles, and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest', in Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds), *Processes of the World-System*, Beverly Hills and London, Sage, pp. 101–18; Mandel, Ernest (1980), *Long Waves of Capitalist Development. The Marxist Interpretation*, Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Maison des Sciences de l'Homme; Screpanti, Ernesto (1984), 'Long Economic Cycles and Recurring Proletarian Insurgencies', *Review*, 7, pp. 509–48; idem (1987), 'Long Cycles in Strike Activity: An Empirical Investigation', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 25, pp. 99–124. It would be inappropriate here to enter into the long wave debate, for the issues far exceed our immediate concerns, and our analysis does not depend upon long waves. We simply note here that the period of syndicalist vitality clearly fell within 'the third Kondratiev'.

- 10 On strikes and strike patterns, see Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard *et al.* (1981), 'Der politische Streik – Geschichte und Theorie', *Jahrbuch Arbeiterbewegung 1981*, Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 13–53; Boll, Friedhelm (1984), 'Streikwellen im europäischen Vergleich', in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Hans-Gerhard Husung (eds), *Auf dem Wege zur Massengewerkschaft. Die Entwicklung der Gewerkschaften in Deutschland und Grossbritannien 1880–1914*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, pp. 109–34; Screpanti, 'Long Cycles in Strike Activity'; and Mikkelsen, Flemming (1986), 'Workers and Industrialization in Scandinavia, 1750–1940', in Michael Hanagan and Charles Stephenson (eds), *Proletarians and Protest. The Roots of Class Formation in an Industrializing World*, New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 21–54.
- 11 Screpanti, 'Long Cycles in Strike Activity', p. 107. In Screpanti's view it is no coincidence that these major upheavals all took place during the downturns in Kondratiev cycles. In his words, 'the tension provoked by growth will be suppressed but accumulated for a long time; it will then break out periodically either as a direct consequence of strong compression, as in a Diesel engine, or in response to an external spark, as in a normal combustion engine.' How closely workers' militancy can be linked to particular points in Kondratiev waves (if at all) is debatable, and need not concern us here. But Screpanti's comments elsewhere (in 'Long Economic Cycles') about what is common to major waves of insurgency – their proletarian character, their autonomy, their frequently revolutionary nature – are noteworthy. Such insurgency, whether around 1870, the First World War, or the late 1960s, implies, Screpanti claims, 'a weakening of the political grip that traditional institutions of the labor movement have on working-class behaviour. On the social side, the workers' refusal to accept any institutional mediation and filtering of their own interests and targets leads to the emergence of the rank-and-file as the political protagonist, so that established groups of union and party leaders are superseded by the workers themselves and their mass organizations as the decision-makers in the struggle.' The emergence of a distinctive syndicalist movement is certainly consonant with these characteristics.
- 12 On increasingly distinct and homogeneous working-class neighbourhoods in Europe, see Cronin, James E. (1974), 'Labor Insurgency and Class Formation: Comparative Perspectives on the Crisis of 1917–1920 in Europe', in Cronin and Sirianni, *Work, Community, and Power*, pp. 20–48, and in Argentina, Bourd , Guy

- (1974), *Urbanisation et immigration en Amérique Latine. Buenos-Aires (XIXe et XXe siècles)*, Paris: Editions Aubier-Montaigne. On real wages prior to 1914, see the European data in Zamagni, Vera (1989), 'An International Comparison of Real Industrial Wages, 1890–1913: Methodological Issues and Results', in Peter Scholliers (ed.), *Real Wages in 19th and 20th Century Europe. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, New York: Berg, pp. 107–42, and in Bauer, Otto (1914), 'Die Teuerung' [Report to the International Socialist Congress, Vienna, 23–29 August 1914], published in Georges Haupt (1967), *Der Kongress fand nicht statt. Die Sozialistische Internationale 1914*, Vienna: Europaverlag the Mexican data in Rosenzweig, Fernando (1965), 'El desarrollo económico de México: 1877 à 1911', *El Trimestre Económico*, 22(3), pp. 405–54; and the Argentinian data in Bourdè, *Urbanisation et immigration*.
- 13 Kertzer, David I. (1984), *Family Life in Central Italy, 1880–1910. Sharecropping, Wage Labor and Coresidence*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Snowden, Frank M. (1986), *Violence and the Great Estates in the South of Italy. Apulia, 1900–1920*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Sykes, Thomas R. (1976), 'Revolutionary Syndicalism in the Italian Labor Movement: The Agrarian Strikes of 1907–08 in the Province of Parma', *International Review of Social History*, 21, pp. 186–211; Cutileiro, José (1977), *Ricos e Pobres no Alentejo. Uma Sociedade Rural Portuguesa*, Lisbon: Sa da Costa; Pacheco Pereira, José (1980), 'As lutas sociais dos trabalhadores alentejanos: do banditismo à greve', *Análise Social*, 61–62, pp. 135–56; Malefakis, Edward E. (1970), *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain. Origins of the Civil War*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Taft, Philip (1960), 'The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt', *Labor History*, 1, pp. 53–67; Frader, Laura L. (1978), 'Paysannerie et syndicalisme révolutionnaire. Les ouvriers viticoles de Coursan (1850–1914)', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*, New Series, 28, pp. 11–38.
 - 14 Bjørnson, Øyvind (1980), 'Kollektiv aksjon blant typografer og malarar i Trondheim 1880–1918', *Tidsskrift for Arbeiderbevegelsens Historie*, 2, pp. 141–66; Renzsch, Wolfgang (1980), *Handwerker und Lohnarbeiter in der frühen Arbeiterbewegung. Zur sozialen Basis von Gewerkschaften und Sozialdemokratie im Reichsgründungsjahrzehnt*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Price, Richard (1980), *Masters, Unions and Men. Work Control in Building and the Rise of Labour 1830–1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Jackson, Robert Max (1984), *The Formation of Craft Labor Markets*, New York: Academic Press.
 - 15 Phillips, Gordon and Whiteside, Noel (1985), *Casual Labour. The Unemployment Question in the Port Transport Industry 1880–1970*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 2.
 - 16 Mess, H.A. (1916), *Casual Labour at the Docks*, London: Bell & Sons; Barnes, Charles B. (1915), *The Longshoremen*, New York: Survey Associates (reprint: New York: Arno Press, 1977); Lovell, John (1969), *Stevedores and Dockers. A Study of Trade Unionism in the Port of London*, London and New York: A.M. Kelley; Grüttner, Michael (1984), *Arbeitswelt an der Wasserkante. Sozialgeschichte der Hamburger Hafenarbeiter 1886–1914*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; De Groot, Gertjan (1988), '"Door slapte gedaan gekregen". Losse arbeiders en hun gezinnen in Amsterdam tussen 1880 en 1920', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 14, pp. 160–87.
 - 17 Gasworkers, for example. See Hobsbawm, Eric (1964), 'British Gas-Workers 1873–1914', in idem, *Labouring Men. Studies in the History of Labour*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, pp. 158–78; Paletta, Giuseppe and Perego, Giorgio (1982), 'Organizzazione operaia e innovazione tecnologica. La Lega gasisti di Milano 1900–1915', *Annali Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, 22, pp. 49–86.
 - 18 Mess, *Casual Labour at the Docks*, p. 123.
 - 19 This statement must be qualified regarding casual agricultural workers. Their generally complete lack of financial reserves made it difficult for day labourers to hold firm in a strike during their main earning period, with seasonal unemployment looming. 'Unlike an industrial strike', Edward E. Malefakis observes in his study of

- Spanish peasants, 'a harvest strike meant not hunger for a few days or weeks but possibly starvation throughout the year.' And yet it was precisely when landless peasants had the most at stake that the employers were also most vulnerable. Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution*, p. 108. During harvesting 'the strike suddenly acquires a frightening potency'. Frank M. Snowden comments on an Italian example: 'In the panic of an all-out confrontation when the profits for a whole year were at risk, the Apulian proprietors found themselves reduced to the stark alternatives of capitulation or physical force. Both reactions radicalized the labour movement further.' Snowden, *Violence and the Great Estates*, pp. 99f.
- 20 US Immigration Commission (1911), *Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 2 vols, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, vol. I, p. 495.
 - 21 Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, p. 27. See also Dix, Keith (1979), 'Work Relations in the Coal Industry: The Handloading Era, 1880–1930', in Andrew Zimbalist (ed.), *Case Studies on the Labor Process*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, pp. 156–69; Weber, Wolfhard (1978), 'Der Arbeitsplatz in einem expandierenden Wirtschaftszweig: Der Bergmann', in Jürgen Reulecke and Wolfhard Weber (eds), *Fabrik, Familie, Feierabend. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte des Alltags im Industriezeitalter*, Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, pp. 89–113.
 - 22 Jacoby, Sanford M. (1985), *Employing Bureaucracy. Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900–1945*, New York: Columbia University Press, chapter 1.
 - 23 Douglas, Paul H. (1921), *American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 124.
 - 24 Ibid.
 - 25 Hobsbawm, Eric (1964), 'Custom, Wages and Work-Load', in *Labouring Men*, pp. 344–70 at p. 360. It has been argued that metalworkers in Petrograd were relatively indifferent to 'dilution' and that their radicalism should be explained by other factors. See Smith, S.A. (1983), *Red Petrograd. Revolution in the Factories 1917–1918*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - 26 On the disappearance of internal contracting, new management techniques and the bureaucratization of production, see Stone, Katherine (1974), 'The Origin of Job Structures in the Steel Industry', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 6, Summer, pp. 113–73; Hanagan, Michael P. (1980), *The Logic of Solidarity. Artisans and Industrial Workers in Three French Towns, 1871–1914*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press; Littler, Craig R. (1982), *The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies. A Comparative Study of the Transformation of Work Organization in Britain, Japan and the USA*, London: Heinemann; US Department of Commerce (1975), *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office; and Lazonick, William H. (1983), 'Technological Changes and the Control of Work: The Development of Capital–Labour Relations in US Mass Production Industries', in Howard F. Gospel and Craig R. Littler (eds), *Managerial Strategies and Industrial Relations. An Historical and Comparative Study*, London: Heinemann, pp. 111–137. Arthur L. Stinchcombe (1959) offers an explanation why in certain sectors (such as the building industry) the old structures remained in 'Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production: A Comparative Study', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 4, pp. 168–87.
 - 27 Littler, *Development of the Labour Process*, pp. 79 and 96.
 - 28 Lazonick, 'Technological Changes', pp. 111f, 126.
 - 29 Ibid.
 - 30 Mikkelsen, 'Workers and Industrialization in Scandinavia', p. 47.
 - 31 Hanagan, *Logic of Solidarity*, p. 3.
 - 32 Zapka, Klaus (1983), *Politisch-ökonomische Entwicklungs- und Durchsetzungsbedingungen des Tarifvertragssystems*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang; Crouch, Colin (1982), *Trade Unions. The Logic of Collective Action*, Isle of Man: Fontana.
 - 33 Snowden, *Violence and the Great Estates*, p. 95.

- 34 Nilson, Sten Sparre (1981), 'Labor Insurgency in Norway: The Crisis of 1917–1920', *Social Science History*, 5, pp. 393–416.
- 35 *Daily Herald*, 27 September 1913.
- 36 *Syndikalisten*, 8 November 1913.
- 37 Steenson, Gary (1981), 'Not One Man, Not One Penny!' *German Social Democracy, 1863–1914*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, p. 96. See also Schönhoven, Klaus (1980), *Expansion und Konzentration. Studien zur Entwicklung der Freien Gewerkschaften im Wilhelminischen Deutschland 1890 bis 1914*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, pp. 221–60.
- 38 *La Vie Ouvrière*, 5 April 1913.
- 39 Haupt *et al.*, *Der politische Streik. Geschichte und Theorie*.
- 40 Wiardi Beckman, H.B. (1931), *Het Syndicalisme in Frankrijk*, Amsterdam: Querido, p. 18.
- 41 Cited in Friesen, Gerald (1976), '"Yours in Revolt": The Socialist Party and the Western Canadian Labour Movement', *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 1, pp. 139–57 at p. 148.
- 42 Snowden, *Violence and the Great Estates*, p. 94.
- 43 Stearns, Peter (1971), *Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor. A Cause without Rebels*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- 44 Löwenthal, Richard (1981), 'The 'Missing Revolution' in Industrial Societies: Comparative Reflections on a German Problem', in Volker R. Berghahn and Martin Kitchen (eds), *Germany in the Age of Total War*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 240–60.
- 45 Arvidsson, Evert (1960), *Der freiheitliche Syndikalismus im Wohlfahrtsstaat*, Darmstadt: Die Freie Gesellschaft, p. 21.
- 46 *Ibid.*, pp. 21–3.

Chapter 5

Second Thoughts on Revolutionary Syndicalism¹

Introduction

Although research into the history of revolutionary-syndicalist movements has yielded a great many new insights in the last 25 to 30 years, it is still much too early to make an internationally comparative synthesis. Some attempts in this direction have been made,² but these are still very exploratory and leave many questions unanswered or even undiscussed. In this chapter I want to discuss some problems which seem important to resolve before we can achieve a comprehensive interpretation of syndicalism as a worldwide phenomenon.

First, we need to be clear about our definition of revolutionary syndicalism. This is a difficult undertaking because there are 'narrow' as well as 'broad' definitions in use. Wayne Thorpe and I use the term 'in the broadest sense' of 'all revolutionary, direct-actionist' organizations.³ But this has incurred the understandable reproach that we tend 'to blur the distinctions between industrial unionism, syndicalism, and revolutionary socialism'.⁴ Some other authors use the term 'revolutionary syndicalism' in a much more restricted sense to refer only to a subset of the revolutionary, direct-actionist movements. Just as in questions of taste, it is pointless to quibble about definitions. There does not exist any 'objective' criterion on the strength of which we would be able to say that the 'narrow' term is better than the 'broad' term and vice versa. The only thing we can do is always to make it clear in which sense we are using the concept.

Even so, such a specification is really still insufficient because if we adhere to, for example, a 'narrow' definition, it still remains unclear what exactly we are talking about. In practice there seem to be at least three analytical levels which quite often are not, or not sufficiently, distinguished. In the first place, we could distinguish the *ideological* level, at which one thinks about the movement in a general, political-philosophical way. At issue here are questions such as: what is the world really like? What is unjust, bad and so on? Who are our enemies and friends? What social changes are possible, and how can they be accomplished?⁵ Second, we could distinguish the *organizational* level: how is the trade union structured (for example, dues, strike funds) and, when labour conflicts occur, how does it behave in daily practice towards employers and the state? Third, there is the *shopfloor* level: are the workers who are members militant and strike-prone? What forms of action do they favour?

A source of confusion is that these three levels sometimes point in the same direction, but often do not. Everyone can agree that an organization which ideologically defends anarcho-syndicalism, organizationally possesses a federative structure without a strike fund and, on the shopfloor, is extremely militant and strike-prone can be defined as revolutionary-syndicalist. However, things become more difficult when a movement does not correspond to the ideal type at all three levels. Then where should we draw the boundary? Traditionally there exists a strong tendency among historians to see the ideological level as decisive. This can lead to a conception of movements without any relevant trade union practice as 'syndicalist' because they orient *attitudinally* towards anarcho-syndicalism.⁶ Here again 'objective' rules are absent. My personal inclination is to regard the ideological criterion as the least important; what counts is what the movement does in practice, and not how it justifies what it does. But, at the same time, I would resist calling movements 'revolutionary syndicalist' if they exhibit syndicalist tendencies exclusively on the shopfloor, or exclusively at the level of organization. Shopfloor and organization levels together form what Anthony Giddens once called 'practical consciousness' – that is, 'those things which actors know tacitly about how to go on in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression'. These contrast with the ideological level, which Giddens would call discursive,⁷ and *in combination* constitute the essence of syndicalism.

According to my personal criteria of a broad approach, and emphasis on shopfloor and organizational levels, not only the movements in the Latin tradition such as the French Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) or the Spanish Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) belong to syndicalism, but also centralist industrial unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Those who use other criteria will obviously arrive at another set of movements.

Until now, most studies of syndicalist movements have focused on the ideological and organizational levels, and have taken a narrative-institutional approach in so doing. That is certainly not a bad thing; knowledge of the institutional sphere is crucial as a basis for all other research that we could do, and on which I will elaborate later.

About some movements we know relatively a great deal in this respect (for example, the French CGT, the American IWW and the Spanish CNT), but some other movements (such as a number of Latin American ones) until now have remained almost unknown territory. The increased interest taken in syndicalist influences in Germany and Eastern Europe is remarkable.⁸

The Shopfloor Level

Wayne Thorpe and I have defended the thesis that syndicalism was disproportionately influential among two groups of workers. First, there were project workers, like agricultural day labourers, dockers, gasworkers and construction workers who frequently changed jobs (including transoccupational migration), were not bound to a single, long-term employer and had to

act under severe time constraints. Such working conditions naturally encouraged 'direct action' methods. Second, there were workers whose working conditions were being restructured as a consequence of the second industrial revolution (such as miners, railway workers and factory workers). They experienced dilution of skills, labour intensification, reorganization of work processes and increased job mobility.

There are, as far as I know, relatively few differences of opinion about the importance of the first category. But I am not sure that the arguments for the second category are equally persuasive. The first category is, as it were, structurally predisposed towards direct-actionist patterns of behaviour and ways of thinking, but this applies to a much lesser extent to the second category. The loss of craft privileges, for example, does not necessarily lead to social radicalism. There are enough examples of threatened craft workers who articulated their resistance through social democratic, christian democratic or muslim organizations. Further comparative research could be very useful here. Perhaps (and this is only a speculation for which I do not have much evidence) the most important factor which leads craft workers to syndicalist sympathies is not primarily the dilution of their skills, but their increased occupational and geographical mobility. This is suggested by the work of Gérard Noiriel, among others, who has made a good case for the view that the growth of the French CGT at the beginning of the twentieth century is connected to the increased turnover of the industrial workforce.⁹

Organization and Ideology

The organizational aspects of syndicalism have suffered from a peculiar neglect. Admittedly there is an extensive literature about the organizational conceptions of syndicalist leaders and theoreticians, but it has rarely been asked how the organizations actually functioned in everyday life (this is incidentally not only a shortcoming of research about syndicalism; the same applies to the history of social democratic, communist and other labour organizations).¹⁰ For example, was there an implicit division of labour between men and women? How were branch meetings organized? Who had formal or informal authority, and why?

One of the crucial aspects of every proletarian organization is *money*: where did it come from, how much was there, how was it managed, and on what was it spent? These seem vulgar questions to ask, contrasting perhaps somewhat unpleasantly with the heroic aura syndicalism has, but they are essential; all the more so because they have also had practical and political implications in the past. Thus, for example, in the 1930s the Dutch Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat (NAS) was reproached by serious left-wing critics on the ground that it 'exists only thanks to the toleration and financial support of the bourgeois government'.¹¹

In his pathbreaking research into the French *bourses du travail* (crucial for the CGT), Peter Schöttler has shown how these labour exchanges were structurally ambivalent: materially they were largely dependent on the

municipal authorities but, in their aims and aspirations, they belonged to the trade union movement. The consequence was, according to Schöttler, a zig-zagging loyalty.¹² Michel Pigenet and others have subsequently studied the finances of the CGT itself.¹³ Such research obviously contributes much to our insight into the material background of CGT policy. It certainly merits emulation with respect to other movements.¹⁴

For a long time, the ideological level has been viewed by historians as decisive. Research concentrated on congresses, resolutions and writings by the leaders. Not infrequently this fixation has extended, for example, to the portrayal of Georges Sorel as the 'mastermind' of the French and other movements, without seriously investigating whether Sorel really had influence among the workers and, if so, how extensive that influence was.¹⁵

Naturally there continues to be a point in studying the conceptions of syndicalist individuals and congresses, but it is – at least from the standpoint of the historiography of syndicalist *movements* – essential that such studies are expressly situated in the context of working-class struggles. Attempts in that direction have recently been made by Joseph White and Marco Gervasoni,¹⁶ among others, but the work in the older genre still seems to predominate.¹⁷

International Diffusion

Syndicalism was not only an international phenomenon, but also an internationalist movement. National currents influenced each other, learnt from each other, criticized each other, and not only – and not even primarily – via the 'official' International Working Men's Association (IWMA) about which we know much more today thanks to Wayne Thorpe's research (even though the history of the IWMA after 1922 remains very much less researched).¹⁸

Over the course of time, three more or less consecutive 'models' crystallized, which to a certain extent functioned as nuclei for international syndicalist 'families': the French CGT, the American IWW and the Spanish CNT. A considerable amount has been written, about the relative influence of these 'models', but mostly on a bilateral level. One issue that has been long contested is whether or not the French CGT had an influence on the early American IWW. Historians such as Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph Conlin have emphatically denied this, but Salvatore Salerno has recently provided a case to show that this contention warrants revision, certainly at the cultural level.¹⁹

Obviously diffusion is not a unilinear process, in the sense that one movement completely imitates the other (this is the implicit reasoning of those who consider some social movements as 'alien', for example). Rather, a combination of endogenous and exogeneous influences is involved. The exogeneous influences are sometimes more powerful and sometimes less powerful, but never predominate over everything else.

For the spread of syndicalist models in this 'moderate' sense three factors seem to have been of importance.

- 1 *International migration.* The history of, for example, Argentinian or Brazilian anarcho-syndicalism can hardly be understood without regard to the influence of radical South European migrants in those countries.²⁰
- 2 *International labour processes.* Sailors played an important role in spreading the IWW model to Australia, New Zealand, Chile and other countries.²¹
- 3 *Cross-border activities.* Movements in one country regularly, if not intentionally, had an influence on parts of the labour movement in another neighbouring country. A striking example is that of the Mexican activities of the Wobblies, about which Norman Caulfield has written.²²

These three factors could either complement or negate each other. Take the Chilean example. After the First World War the IWW gained a foothold through sailors (evidenced in the strikes by maritime workers in Iquique, Valparaíso and Antofagasta) and subsequently gained influence among bakers, bricklayers, shoeworkers and munition workers. The Chilean IWW, as well as a communist split-off from 1925, were both destroyed in 1927 by the incoming dictator General Ibáñez. After the fall of Ibáñez four years later, a new trade union movement was founded, but this organization was no longer oriented to the IWW (which took industry as its basic unit of organization), but to the older Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA) in neighbouring Argentina, which was set up according to the regional principle.²³

Culture

Crossing the three levels which I distinguished earlier (ideology, organization, rank-and-file) there is another aspect which finds expression at all levels – namely, the culture of the movement, the world of meanings within which it moves and in which it expresses itself. The historians of syndicalism were hardly interested in this topic until recently; they (including myself) concentrated on institutional aspects.²⁴

Such a one-sided approach is, however, in principle incorrect, because, as Marshall Sahlins has justly remarked, ‘there is no material logic apart from the practical interest, and the practical interest . . . is symbolically constituted’.²⁵ Through symbolic processes we give meaning to our existence and produce classificatory grids for creating order in our environment.

An essential element of each culture, and therefore also of syndicalist movements, is gender, and it ought to be emphasized that ‘gender is inherent in all aspects of social life, whether women are present or not’.²⁶ Perhaps the greatest breakthrough in syndicalist research in recent years has been the ‘discovery’ of syndicalism’s gendered nature. The work of Francis Shor and Eva Blomberg has cast the subject in an entirely new light. Their studies suggest that syndicalist culture – despite evident national differences – was characterized by a conception of masculinity in which independence and ‘homosocial alliances’ occupied a central place. Francis Shor has, among other things, made a convincing case that, behind the opposition of Australian IWW members to security (in the name of initiative and job control), there was a

peculiar conception of 'virile syndicalism'.²⁷ And Eva Blomberg has shown that, in Sweden, syndicalism among a group of miners could continue to exist for a long time (longer than one would expect on the basis of general schemata) because this group had constructed a specific male identity.²⁸ With this type of research an important new venue for syndicalist research has been opened. Earlier studies of syndicalist women's organizations (of which the *Mujeres Libres* are, of course, the most well known), the attitude of syndicalist organizations towards female wage labour and the like can now also be integrated in a broader gendered analysis of the movements.²⁹ In this way, the role of violence in syndicalist ideology and practice is also placed in a new light. Francis Shor has argued that sabotage not only formed 'a necessary challenge to the power and authority of the capitalist', but also 'a ritualistic test by which one could claim one's manhood'.³⁰ We could extend this analysis to other terrains – consider, for example, fighting bouts between workers themselves, the importance of physical strength and the role of verbal aggression.

A final cultural factor which deserves our attention is ethnicity. Syndicalist movements probably belonged to those parts of the international labour movement which were the least sensitive to racism. But research is needed to establish whether racism was absent in the same measure at all levels. Pieter van Duin, for example, has suggested that the 'South African section' of the IWW 'never attempted to organize non-white workers, nor ... involve non-whites in any of its activities'³¹ despite explicit anti-racist claims.

Variations

Why have syndicalist movements in some countries been relatively much larger and more important than in other countries? In the past, various answers to this question have already been presented. In part, the kind of answer given appears to depend on whether a broad concept of syndicalism is adopted or not. Authors who restrict revolutionary syndicalism to the 'families' of the CGT and CNT often mention the 'Latin temper' as a reason why the French, Spanish, Italians and others were so 'sensitive' to the syndicalist persuasion.³² Even if one uses a narrow definition of syndicalism restricted to Latin Europe, this remains rather dubious. The 'national character' is after all – despite its common-sense character – a very polyvalent concept without a sharp analytical focus.³³

If one adopts a broad concept of syndicalism and tries to avoid the trap of psychologism, then the drawing together of a number of different dimensions seems to be an obvious approach. Wayne Thorpe and I have suggested five factors which, in combination, can probably explain the success of syndicalism or its absence: the general growth of a radical mood; the nature and changes of labour processes; dissatisfaction with the dominant labour strategy; the feasibility of general strikes; spatial and geographical influences.³⁴

New research suggests that our list is not exhaustive. Gerald Friedman's work is very interesting in this regard. He argues that the policy of the French state had an important influence on the nature of the French trade union

movement. In summary, in the period 1895–1906 the French liberal state regularly intervened in favour of the strikers and was more likely to do so if the number of strikers was greater. The paradox was that the success of revolutionary syndicalists depended on ‘an implicit alliance between them and a liberal state they despised. Revolutionary syndicalists believed that direct workers’ action was a substitute for political action, but when confronting powerful employers they depended on the state to gain concessions they could not win on their own.’³⁵

The supportive role of the state resulted in trade unions tending to levy low membership contributions, so that the number of members increased. However, the low contributions implied few financial means and small strike funds. This in turn meant that union leaders could not restrain rank-and-file militancy: ‘Without control over significant resources, national union leaders could not reward local unions for carefully planning and timing their strikes, and national leaders lacked the means to punish locals that conducted impulsive and poorly planned strikes.’³⁶ Friedman’s analysis reminds us once again that state intervention is a crucial variable. In some cases, dictatorial repression made the development of syndicalist organizations difficult from the start, while in other cases the authorities stimulated – though not intentionally – the development of syndicalism.

The follow-up question is, naturally, why the state sometimes acted in a hostile way and sometimes did not. Such a question is obviously not easy to answer, if only because state policy is the product of long-term processes. But the work of the French sociologist Pierre Birnbaum perhaps gives us a clue. According to Birnbaum, one of the crucial factors which can explain the emergence of syndicalist movements is the relationship between the state and the ruling class. In Germany, for example, the state was unable to differentiate itself from the aristocracy, with the result that the state and the dominant class were fused. The labour movement therefore perceived political and economic power as a single whole and became receptive to Marxism. ‘German social democracy was organized in the very image of the state it hoped to conquer; it was as centralized and disciplined as the state itself.’³⁷ In France, however, the state was much more independent from the dominant class. ‘The absolute state, or the bureaucratized state, presented itself as a machine for dominating civil society and not as the instrument of the dominant class. Domination was thus experienced first in its political dimension, which perhaps explains the initial upsurge of anarchist theories and the subsequent spread of anarcho-syndicalism.’³⁸

Extending this line of reasoning, we could regard the United States as a third pole: after all, domination there was experienced primarily in its *economic* dimension. But these are, at present, only speculations, which suggest great possibilities for comparative studies.³⁹

Decline

How and why did syndicalist movements largely disappear? Wayne Thorpe and I have defended the thesis that the emergence of the welfare state and of

so-called Fordist accumulation patterns placed the movements before a trilemma.

A movement could:

- hold on to its principles, in which case it would inevitably become totally marginalized;
- change course fundamentally and adapt to the new conditions, in which case it would have to abandon its syndicalist principles; or,
- if these two alternatives were unpalatable, disband, or what comes to the same thing, merge into a non-syndicalist trade-union organization.⁴⁰

Several authors have applied this schema in case studies,⁴¹ but a warning is in order. The trilemma focuses attention on the general political-economic conditions undermining the foundations of syndicalist movements; it situates those movements in the long-term developmental pattern of advanced capitalist countries and describes their historically reduced room for manoeuvre. But that does not mean that the experiences of the syndicalist movement were completely determined thereby, for two reasons.

In the first place, the trilemma starts out from the political-economic parameters within which the movements developed themselves. But precisely because *culture* is more than a mirror of structural developments, cultural factors can sustain movements longer than would be logical from a purely material standpoint. The Swedish mineworkers studied by Eva Blomberg are a good example of this.⁴²

In the second place, movements could, for various reasons, disappear long before Fordism and the welfare state made their appearance. I will give five examples which will clarify the range of possibilities to an extent.

- 1 For the French case, Gerald Friedman has argued that, around 1906, the same factor which initially assisted the syndicalists (namely the relatively favourable attitude of the liberal state) turned into its opposite: “the syndicalists” reliance on mass strikes undermined the basis for their success because in the long run such strikes antagonized state officials and drove frightened employers to mobilize collectively in self-defence.⁴³
- 2 As far as the American IWW is concerned, Melvyn Dubofsky has argued that the appearance of the motor car in the 1920s partly changed the social basis of the movement. The culture of the migratory hands changed in essence as a result:

‘Where once migratory workers had been mostly unattached men who beat their way from job to job on “sidedoor coach,” they were fast becoming more and more family units that travelled as far and as often as their battered secondhand cars carried them. For the migratory who rode the rods and camped in the jungles, an IWW red card had been a necessity of life: his insurance policy against coercion by detectives, brakemen, gamblers and thugs. For the family of harvesters which traveled by auto as a self-contained unit, the red card was much less

important. As the years passed and more migratories took to automobiles and more families joined the annual migrations of harvest hands, the IWW's appeal to agricultural workers diminished proportionally.⁴⁴

- 3 In Italy the fascists were able, in the period 1922–27, to integrate part of the syndicalist rank and file into their own National Confederation of Syndicalist Corporations using violence and intimidation on the one hand and political seduction on the other.⁴⁵
- 4 The Russian October Revolution of 1917 caused, in many countries, a wave of enthusiasm for the communist movement which affected the syndicalists as well. After a short period of relative harmony between both currents, they distanced themselves again after 1921, but by then the communists had, in many cases, already recruited a significant part of the syndicalist rank and file and had thus weakened the old revolutionary trade union movement.⁴⁶
- 5 National Socialism and Francoism meant, as is well known, the end of the syndicalist current in Germany and Spain.⁴⁷

A Final Point

It would be interesting to compare the syndicalist movements with the newer radical labour movements in countries without a developed welfare state, such as the Polish *Solidarność* or the movement of metalworkers, the urban poor and landless peasants in Brazil. Such movements obviously differ in several respects from the movements I have been discussing, but at the same time they had (at least in their initial phases) a similar sort of directly democratic and direct-actionist approach. The question, then, could be: why did these movements develop, despite some homologies, in a different direction than syndicalism? To answer this question would not only give us more insight into the peculiarities of syndicalism, but would also show once again that workers' radicalism has known many forms of expression and still does.

Notes

- 1 Keynote address, conference 'Syndicalism: Swedish and International Historical Experiences', Stockholm University, 13–14 March 1998. I wish to thank Bert Altena, Melvyn Dubofsky, Lex Heerma van Voss, Michael Seidman and Wayne Thorpe for their comments on a previous draft of this chapter.
- 2 Peterson, Larry (1983), 'The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, 1900–1925', in James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (eds), *Work, Community and Power*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 49–87; Schöttler, Peter (1985), 'Syndikalismus in der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung: Neuere Forschungen in Frankreich, England und Deutschland', in Klaus Tenfelde (ed.), *Geschichte der Arbeiterschaft und der Arbeiterbewegung*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1985, pp. 419–75; van der Linden, Marcel and Thorpe, Wayne, 'The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism', Chapter 4 in this volume.

Older comparative attempts are: Bötcher, Hans (1922), *Zur revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung in Amerika, Deutschland und England. Eine vergleichende Betrachtung*, Jena: Gustav Fischer; and Holgate, Philip (1961), 'Aspects of Syndicalism in Spain, Sweden and USA', *Anarchy*, 1 (2), pp. 56–64.

3 Chapter 4 of this volume.

4 Olssen, Erik (1992), review of van der Linden and Thorpe, *Revolutionary Syndicalism, International Review of Social History*, 37, pp. 107–109 at p. 108.

5 I have been inspired here by the three 'fundamental modes of ideological interpellation' in Therborn, Göran (1980), *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, London: Verso, 1980, p. 18.

6 Altena, Bert (1989), 'Een broeinest der anarchie'. *Arbeiders, arbeidersbeweging en maatschappelijke ontwikkeling, Vlissingen 1875–1929* (1940), 2 vols, Haarlem: Thesis. See also the debate on this issue between Altena and myself (1990) in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 105, pp. 605–13.

7 Giddens, Anthony (1984), *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 41–45, 374–75. The distinction between both levels remains problematic, despite their obvious meaning. Edward Thompson once remarked 'The sailor "knows" his seas' (Thompson, E.P. (1978), *The Poverty of Theory*, London: Merlin, p. 199), to indicate that there is such a thing as practical consciousness. But Paul Hirst has noted here: 'Of course sailors do, but they also know where not to go in order to avoid the sea monsters and they know the fate awaits the poor fool who set out into the Atlantic to sail to Cathay. These things form a single "knowledge", confirmed a hundred times over by "experience".' Hirst, Paul Q. (1985), *Marxism and Historical Writing*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 73.

Anderson notes that the concept of 'experience' in ordinary language contains an ambiguity: 'On the one hand, the word denotes an occurrence or episode as it is lived by the participants, the subjective texture of objective actions On the other, it indicates a subsequent process of learning from such occurrences, a subjective alteration capable of modifying ensuing objective actions.' Anderson, Perry (1980), *Arguments Within English Marxism*, London: Verso, p. 26. Anderson states the distinction between the two as follows: the first type is 'a set of mental and emotional responses as it were "given with" a set of lived events to which they correspond'. The second type is experience as 'an objective sector of "social being", which is then processed or handled by the subject to yield a particular "social consciousness". The possibility of different ways of "handling" the same experience is epistemologically secured.' Anderson, *Arguments*, pp. 29–30.

8 On Germany see among others, Bock, Hans Manfred (1989), 'Anarchosyndikalismus in Deutschland. Eine Zwischenbilanz', *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* [hereafter *IWK*], 25, pp. 293–358; Bock, Hans Manfred (1993), 'Nachwort zur Neuausgabe 1993', *Syndikalismus und Linkskommunismus von 1918 bis 1923*, 2nd edn, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, pp. 475–93; Nelles, Dieter (1995), 'Syndikalismus und Unionismus. Neuere Ergebnisse und Perspektiven der Forschung', *IWK*, 31, pp. 348–56; Peterson, Larry (1993), *German Communism, Workers' Protest, and Labor Unions. The Politics of the United Front in Rhineland-Westphalia 1920–1924*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers; Rübner, Hartmut (1994), *Freiheit und Brot. Die Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Anarchosyndikalismus*, Berlin and Cologne: Libertad.

On Eastern Europe: Goldberger, Samuel (1985), 'Ervin Szabó, Anarcho-Syndicalism and Revolution in Turn-of-the-Century Hungary', unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University, 603 pp.; Kieszczyński, Lucjan (1983), 'Syndykalizm Polski' [Polish Syndicalism], *Kwartalnik Historii Ruchu Zawodowego*, 22 (1–2), pp. 98–108; Salwiński, Jacek (1991), 'Krakowscy anarchosyndikalisci Augustyna Wróblewskiego (przed pierwsza wojna światowa)' [Augustyn Wróblewski and the

- Cracow Anarchosyndicalists Before World War I], *Studia Historyczne*, **34**, pp. 247–60; Tomek, Václav (1992), 'Tschechischer Anarchismus um die Jahrhundertwende', *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit*, **12**, pp. 97–130; idem. (1994), 'Anarchismus als eigenständige politische Partei oder als breite Gefühls- und Ideenströmung. Dokumente zu einer Diskussion über die Zukunft des tschechischen Anarchismus im Jahr 1914', *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit*, **13**, pp. 63–90.
- 9 Noiriél, Gérard (1986), *Les ouvriers dans la société française, XIXe–XXe siècle*, Paris: Seuil, Chapter 3.
 - 10 There are of course exceptions to the rule. See for example Pigenet, Michel (1996), 'Le métier ou l'industrie? Les structures d'organisation et les enjeux au tournant du siècle', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'institut de recherches marxistes*, **62**, pp. 25–41.
 - 11 *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937–38)*, New York: Pathfinder (1976), p. 82.
 - 12 Schöttler, Peter (1982), *Die Entstehung der 'Bourses du Travail'. Sozialpolitik und französischer Syndikalismus am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus. French translation (1988): *Naissance des Bourses du Travail*, Paris: PUF. See also Schöttler's (1981), 'Politique sociale ou lutte des classes: notes sur le syndicalisme "apolitique" des bourses du travail', *Le Mouvement Social*, **116**, pp. 3–20, and his (1989), 'Zwischen Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitskampf: Die Bourses du Travail während der Belle Epoque', in Brummert, Ulrike (ed.), *Jean Jaurès. Frankreich, Deutschland und die Zweite Internationale am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Tübingen: Gunter Narr, pp. 131–60. On labour exchanges now also Treppe, Rolande (1993), *Solidaires. Les Bourses du Travail*, Paris: Scandéditi-tions.
 - 13 Pigenet, Michel (1993), 'Prestations et services dans le mouvement syndical français (1860–1914)', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'institut de recherches marxistes*, **51**, pp. 7–28; 'Les finances, une approche des problèmes de structure et d'orientation de la CGT (1895–1914)', *Le Mouvement Social*, **172** (1995), pp. 53–88; Geslin, Claude (1995), 'Les finances syndicales en Bretagne avant 1914', *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, **102** (3), pp. 11–36.
 - 14 What is remarkable is that the labour exchanges as such (except for Schöttler's work) have hardly been studied. This is even more true of Italy; the only relevant work I know of is already more than a hundred years old: Sombart, Werner (1895), 'Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des italienischen Proletariats: IV, Die Arbeiterkammern (Camere del lavoro) in Italien', *Archiv für Soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik*, **8**, pp. 521–74.
 - 15 The stream of publications about Sorel continues. Recent studies include among others: Julliard, Jacques (1988), *Autonomie ouvrière. Etudes sur le syndicalisme d'action*, Paris: Seuil, pp. 231–55; Van Stokkom, Bas (1990), *Georges Sorel: de ontnuchtering van de verlichting*, Zeist: Kerkebosch; Furiozzi, Gian Biagio (1991), 'Il mito bolscevico in Sorel', *Socialismo Storia*, **3**, pp. 557–71; Samarskaia, E.A. (1994), 'Zhorzh Sorel: Vechnyi eretik (1847–1922)' [Georges Sorel (1847–1922): The Eternal Heretic], *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoria*, (2), pp. 103–24; and Cavallari, Giovanna (1994), *Georges Sorel: archeologia di un rivoluzionario*, Naples: Jovene. See also the journal *Mil neuf cent. Cahiers Georges Sorel*.
 - 16 White, Joseph (1991), *Tom Mann*, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Gervasoni, Marco (1996), 'Il linguaggio politico del sindacalismo d'azione diretta in Francia: la rappresentazione del sociale e la concezione dell'autonomia della C.G.T. di fronte allo stato repubblicano (1895–1914)', *Società e storia*, **74**, pp. 771–820; idem (1996), '"Libertà" e "autonomia" nell'immaginario delle Borse del Lavoro francesi tra anarchismo e socialismo', *Rivista storica dell'anarchismo*, **3** (1), pp. 5–29.
 - 17 For example, Bilsky, Edgardo (1990), 'Aux origines de la tradition sorélienne en Argentine: le syndicalisme révolutionnaire (1904–1910)', *Cahiers des Amériques Latines*, **9**, pp. 81–95; DeAngelis, Susanna (1980), 'Sergio Panunzio: rivoluzione e/o stato dei sindacati', *Storia contemporanea*, **11**, pp. 969–87; Favilli, Paolo (1994),

- 'Marxismo e sindacalismo rivoluzionario in Italia', *Società e storia*, **64**, pp. 315–59 and **65**, pp. 559–609; Laurent, John (1989), 'Tom Mann on Science, Technology, and Society', *Science & Society*, **53**, pp. 84–93; Sznajder, Mario (1993), 'I miti del sindacalismo rivoluzionario', *Storia Contemporanea*, **24**, pp. 21–57; Vadász, Sándor (1982), 'A francia anarchoszindikalizmus ideológiája' [The Ideology of French Anarcho-Syndicalism], *Párttörténeti Közlemények*, **1**, pp. 59–89; Wedman, Homme (1992), 'Christiaan Cornelissen: Marxism and Revolutionary Syndicalism', in Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *Die Rezeption der Marxschen Theorie in den Niederlanden*, Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, pp. 84–105.
- 18 Thorpe, Wayne (1989), *The Workers Themselves. Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913–1922*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers; idem (1990), 'Syndicalist Internationalism before World War II', in van der Linden and Thorpe, *Revolutionary Syndicalism*, pp. 237–60. See also: Milner, Susan (1990), *The Dilemmas of Internationalism. French Syndicalism and the International Labour Movement, 1900–1914*, Oxford: Berg.
 - 19 Salerno, Salvatore (1989), *Red November, Black November. Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World*, Albany, NY: SUNY, pp. 93–115.
 - 20 Dulles, John W.F. (1973), *Anarchists and Communists in Brazil, 1900–1935*, Austin: Texas University Press, Chapter 1; Bourdè, Guy (1974), *Urbanisation et immigration en Amérique Latine. Buenos Aires (XIXe et XXe siècles)*, Paris: Aubier, Parts 3 and 4.
 - 21 Olssen, Erik (1988), *The Red Feds. Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908–1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Burgman, Verity (1996), *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism. The IWW in Australia*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press; DeShazo, Peter (1983), *Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902–1927*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. On international IWW activities see Renshaw, Patrick (1967), *The Wobblies. The Story of Syndicalism in the United States*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, pp. 275–93.
 - 22 Caulfield, Norman (1995), 'Wobblies and Mexican Workers in Mining and Petroleum, 1905–1924', *International Review of Social History*, **40**, pp. 51–75.
 - 23 Simon, S. Fanny (1946), 'Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism in South America', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, **26**, pp. 38–59 at p. 53.
 - 24 But see Battini, Michele (1984), 'L'etica dei produttori e le culture del sindacalismo francese, 1886–1910', *Critica Storica*, **20**, pp. 548–620, or Salerno, *Red November, Black November*.
 - 25 Sahlins, Marshall (1976), *Culture and Practical Reason*, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, p. 207.
 - 26 Tosh, John (1994), 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, **38**, pp. 179–202 at p. 180.
 - 27 Shor, Francis (1992), 'Masculine Power and Virile Syndicalism. A Gendered Analysis of the IWW in Australia', *Labour History*, **63**, pp. 83–99.
 - 28 Blomberg, Eva (1995), *Män i mörker. Arbetsgivare, reformister och syndikalister. Politik och identitet i svensk gruvindustri 1910–1940*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, esp. pp. 300–345.
 - 29 For instance, Ackelsberg, Martha A. (1991), *Free Women of Spain. Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; Heinen, Jacqueline (1979), 'Espagne (1936–1938): Les femmes dans la guerre civile', in Annick Mahaim, Alix Holt and Jacqueline Heinen, *Femmes et mouvement ouvrier. Allemagne d'avant 1914, Révolution russe, Révolution espagnole*, Paris: La Brèche, pp. 131–223; Nash, Mary (1981), *Mujer y movimiento obrero en España*, Barcelona: Fontamara; Nash, Mary (1995), *Defying Male Civilization. Women in the Spanish Civil War*, Denver: Arden Press; Regin, Cornelia (1989), 'Hausfrau und Revolution. Die Frauenpolitik der Anarchosyndikalisten in der Weimarer Republik', *IWK*, **25**, pp. 379–98; Seidman, Michael (1992), 'Women's Subversive Individualism in Barcelona during the 1930s', *International*

- Review of Social History*, 37, pp. 161–76; Jennings, Jeremy (1991), 'The CGT and the Couriau Affair: Syndicalist Responses to Female Labour in France before 1914', *European History Quarterly*, 21, pp. 321–37.
- 30 Shor, 'Masculine Power', p. 93.
- 31 Van Duin, Pieter (1990), 'South Africa', in Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds), *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870–1914*, vol. II, Leiden: Brill, pp. 623–52 at p. 649. An early serious study of the South African IWW is Philips, John (1978), 'The South African Wobblies: The Origin of Industrial Unions in South Africa', *Ufahamu*, 8 (3), pp. 122–38.
- 32 For example Ridley, F.F. (1970), *Revolutionary Syndicalism in France*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 11–15.
- 33 Daniel Bell distinguishes 'five different elements that are often lumped together and confused as national character when writers use the term. These are: 1. national creed; 2. national imagoes; 3. national style; 4. national consciousness; 5. modal personalities'. Bell, Daniel (1980), 'National Character Revisited' (1968), in idem, *Sociological Journeys. Essays 1960–1980*, London: Heinemann, pp. 167–83 at p. 181.
- 34 Chapter 4 of the present volume.
- 35 Friedman, Gerald C. (1997), 'Revolutionary Unions and French Labour: The Rebels behind the Cause; or, Why Did Revolutionary Syndicalism Fail?', *French Historical Studies*, 20, pp. 155–81 at p. 177.
- 36 Friedman, Gerald (1988), 'Strike Success and Union Ideology: The United States and France, 1880–1914', *Journal of Economic History*, 47, pp. 1–25 at p. 10.
- 37 Birnbaum, Pierre (1986), 'States, Ideologies and Collective Action in Western Europe', in Ali Kazancıgil (ed.), *The State in Global Perspective*, Aldershot: Gower/UNESCO, pp. 232–49 at pp. 237–38.
- 38 Ibid., 'States', p. 238. See also Birnbaum, Pierre (1988), *States and Collective Action. The European Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapters 4 and 5.
- 39 The relationship between the state and the economically dominant class also has a geographic aspect. In a short essay Julián Casanova has proposed that 'in Spain the main industrial centers (Bilbao and Barcelona) did not coincide with the main political center (Madrid)'; this would explain in part why the anarchists did not take over centralized power during the Civil War. Casanova, Julián (1992), 'Anarchism, Revolution and Civil War in Spain: The Challenge of Social History', *International Review of Social History*, 37, pp. 398–404 at p. 402.
- Victor Kiernan has mooted the idea that, in Western Europe and the USA, the capital city is usually geographically separated from the economic centre (he mentions London, Paris, Brussels, Vienna, Madrid and Rome), while this is a different matter further to the East. 'Here we see government (and finance) and industry closer together in location, because closer in mutual need: the State requiring technology for power-politics, the factories requiring tariffs, subsidies, orders, the kind of patronage that bankers or trading corporations always had greedy beaks upon.' Examples are Budapest, Berlin, St. Petersburg. Kiernan, Victor (1972), 'Victorian London: Unending Purgatory', *New Left Review*, 76, November–December, pp. 73–90 at p. 79. Perhaps we should incorporate these sorts of observations in our further analyses.
- 40 See Chapter 4 of the present volume. See also Marcel van der Linden (1984), 'Vorläufiges zur vergleichenden Sozialgeschichte des Syndikalismus', in Heribert Baumann, Francis Bulhof and Gottfried Mergner (eds), *Anarchismus in Kunst und Politik. Zum 85. Geburtstag von Arthur Lehning*, Oldenburg: Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg, pp. 41–57 at pp. 53–54.
- 41 For example, Altena, 'Een broeiest der anarchie', vol. 1, p. 418; Rübner, *Freiheit und Brot*, pp. 260–61.
- 42 Blomberg, *Män i mörker*.

- 43 Friedman, 'Revolutionary Unions', p. 177.
- 44 Dubofsky, Melvyn (1969), *We Shall Be All. A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Chicago: Quadrangle, pp. 447–48.
- 45 The literature in this area is rather extensive. One of the first attempts at analysis was Leichter, Käthe (1932), 'Vom revolutionären Syndikalismus zur Verstaatlichung der Gewerkschaften', in *Festschrift für Carl Grünberg zum 70. Geburtstag*, Leipzig: Hirschfeld, pp. 243–81. See further Abse, Tobias (1982), 'Syndicalism and the Origins of Italian Fascism', *Historical Journal*, **25**, pp. 247–58; Cordova, Ferdinando (1974), *Le origine dei sindacati fascisti, 1918–1926*, Bari: Laterza; Olivetti, Angelo Oliviero (1984), *Dal sindacalismo rivoluzionario al corporativismo*, Rome: Bonacci; Roberts, David D. (1979), *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; Tighino, John J. (1991), *Edmondo Rossoni. From Revolutionary Syndicalism to Fascism*, New York: Peter Lang. For an urban case study, see DeBernardi, Alberto, 'Operai, sindacati e regime negli anni venti. Il caso di Milano', *Società e storia*, **40**, pp. 335–78.
- 46 The social aspects of the relationship between early communism and syndicalism have been little researched. See, however, Amdur, Kathryn E. (1987), 'La tradition révolutionnaire entre syndicalisme et communisme dans la France de l'entre-deux-guerres', *Le Mouvement Social*, **139**, pp. 37–50; and Peterson, Larry (1984), 'Revolutionary Socialism and Industrial Unrest in the Era of the Winnipeg Strike: The Origins of Communist Labour Unionism in Europe and North America', *Labour/Le Travailleur*, **13**, pp. 115–31.
- 47 About the experiences of syndicalism during the Nazi dictatorship we know a little more in recent years. See Haug, Wolfgang (1989), 'Eine Flamme erlischt'. Die Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands (Anarchosyndikalisten) von 1932–1937', *IWK*, **25**, pp. 359–78. On the CNT under Franco see Berruezo, José (1967), *Contribución a la historia de la CNT de España en el exilio*, Mexico: Mexicanos Unidos; Molina, Juan M. (1976), *El movimiento clandestino en España 1939–1949*, Mexico: Mexicanos Unidos; Bernecker, Walther L. (1982), 'Die Arbeiterbewegung unter dem Franquismus', in Waldmann, Peter *et al.*, *Die geheime Dynamik autoritärer Diktaturen. Vier Studien über sozialen Wandel in der Franco-Ära*, Munich: Vögel, pp. 61–198; Balfour, Sebastian (1989), *Dictatorship, Workers and the City. Labour in Greater Barcelona since 1939*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; and the epilogue in Casanova, Julián (1997), *De la calle al frente. El anarcosindicalismo en España, 1931–1939*, Barcelona: Crítica, pp. 238–46.

Chapter 6

Communist Parties: The First Generation (1918–1923)

Introduction

Notwithstanding the establishment of communist parties throughout the world as late as the 1960s, the five and a half years from mid-1918 through 1923 are considered the 'founding moment'¹ of the international communist movement. According to Arthur Stinchcombe, one might say that 'an examination of the history of almost any type of organization shows that there are great spurts of foundation of organizations of the type, followed by periods of relatively fundamentally different kinds of organization in the same field'.² The founding of communist parties in the first few years after the October Revolution can be regarded as such a spurt. Each communist party represented a national 'initial solution' to certain problems facing segments of the working class, the peasantry and the intellectuals who sympathized with them.³

Studying the founding moment is essential for understanding the parties' subsequent development, as several long-lasting political and cultural characteristics were determined during this period. Even when the immediate conditions that gave rise to a party's foundation ceased to exist, the organization was often able to retain its essential political and cultural characteristics – provided that the internal structures were consolidated, a tradition was established and a socialization process was perpetuated in families and communities that continued to produce new generations of militants who adapted themselves to the inherited norms and values. Thus, an analysis of the initial situation is essential to understand the later developments.

It is difficult to pinpoint the end of the founding moment for individual parties. First, there were parties that had existed prior to 1917–18 and simply changed their name afterwards. Second, some parties were still in embryonic stages of development at the time of their official establishment. One such example was the German party, which, despite its founding at the end of December in 1918, took on its definitive form (for the time being) following its merger with the USPD in December 1920. Third, various parties constantly underwent changes over a long period, making it difficult to indicate when they were actually consolidated. Finally, the parties' fate was not exclusively contingent upon the circumstances of their inception. Their subsequent development sometimes entailed stages of disruption, thereby resulting in

qualitative changes. For these reasons, the 'founding moment' is a vague concept. Frequently, however, it is easy to determine when national communist parties acquired their lasting identities as organizations.

Causes of Initial Success

I will briefly examine two aspects of early communist parties – namely, the weight they carried within the domestic balance of political power and their social composition.

Following their 'gestation period', some early communist parties (for example, in Germany and Czechoslovakia) acquired political influence domestically, whereas others (such as those in Britain or Switzerland) never progressed beyond factions of virtual insignificance. In addition, the role of several parties in this classification is rather ambiguous, such as those in China and Indonesia, as they were quite influential despite their small membership. Why were some parties initially more successful than others?

One reason involves the circumstances in which these parties were established. There were five possible scenarios: secession from an existing socialist or social democratic party, evolution from a party that had split with the social democratic movement prior to 1917–18 or that had arisen independently thereof, politicization of unions and other non-party organizations, mergers by several radical movements, or a combination of the events described above.

Several observations can be made. First, all successful communist parties also had successful predecessors. In Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, and Germany, they were (partial) heirs to highly advanced social democratic parties, whereas the Bulgarian communist party was a continuation of the older 'narrow' socialists, who were already influential before the October Revolution. This statement also holds true for the Indonesian communist party which derived much of its influence from its incorporation of parts of Sarekat Islam, as well as the Chinese communist party which achieved temporary growth by taking over anarchist organizations and participating in the Guomindang.

The reverse does not apply. The success of older organizations by no means guaranteed outgrowths in the form of thriving communist parties. A case in point is Austria where the powerful social democratic party succeeded in keeping its ranks closed, thereby relegating the *Kommunistische Partei Österreichs* (KPÖ) to a marginal role.

In countries where independent radical-socialist predecessors had existed before 1917–18 and had not yet expanded into larger organizations (for example, the Netherlands and Chile), the communist successors remained small during the founding moment.

This trend suggests that the rapid establishment of organizations was simplest when it was possible to take over all or part of existing organizations, including their financial resources, cadres and established networks of communication,⁴ although massive support from Russia/the Soviet Union

(as, for example, in the case of Hungary) could sometimes mitigate the absence of these. This hypothesis is borne out by Pertti Laulajainen's research, in which he shows that the Finnish communists were strongest in areas where the workers were highly organized and where they gained possession of an organization that enabled communist ideology to be 'radiated' to its immediate hinterland.⁵ Of course, it was always possible to build a network from scratch, albeit with a significantly greater investment of time and energy.

This point brings us to the second major factor: timing. All successful 'births' appear to have occurred before the middle of 1921 – parties established after that time were of little significance in the beginning. Undoubtedly, the importance of two historical events is responsible for this difference: the First World War, which made many workers aware of the nefarious consequences of war as well as the ruin of social democracy, and the October Revolution, which provided an alternative. The surge of enthusiasm generated by these experiences among large segments of the working-class population subsided after a few years.⁶

The third factor was the nature of state intervention. Dictatorial repression obviously made the process of party formation considerably more difficult, if not impossible, as evidenced by the situation in Japan, where the founding moment had little effect due to continuous oppression. Consequently, the aforementioned catalysts (judiciously timed secession from a thriving organization) applied only in the case of competitive political systems.⁷ Furthermore, there were several cases where oppression rapidly decimated parties that had made a good start (for example, Yugoslavia from the end of 1920).

Furthermore, Duncan Gallie has suggested, on the basis of a comparison of Britain with France, that the level of both confrontational and integrating intervention by states where a competitive political system does exist may play a role.⁸ Additional research is necessary to assess the significance of this factor for the various cases. As early as 1927, in a similar vein, Alexander Šifrin defended the stance that 'general social conditions' had developed in Northwest Europe (England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden) that obstructed communism:

These countries with their entrenched capitalism and organic cultivation of democracy failed to provide a fertile breeding ground for communism. On the other hand, the workers movements also failed to stimulate communism. ... English, Belgian, Dutch and Scandinavian reformism focuses on positive and successful social work. This reformism has achieved social legislation for the working masses, has organized them politically and has shown them the path to upward mobility.⁹

The fourth factor consisted of Russia/the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Their strong influence over national party leadership enabled them to encourage, or even force, changes of political direction that had both good and bad consequences.¹⁰

Social Composition

Sociological characteristics of members are important data for classifying early communist parties. Obviously, this aspect could be a source of major national differences. In the past, several attempts have been made to reveal cross-national similarities. According to an opinion long held by the communists themselves, the split between the social democrats and the communists was a split between the privileged labour aristocrats 'bought' by the bourgeoisie on the one hand, and the uncorrupted and therefore revolutionary workers on the other.¹¹

A second view is expounded by Lucien Laurat (Otto Maschl), a co-founder of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschösterreichs*. Laurat distinguishes between the experienced social democrat militants, who had a history of political involvement and adopted positions following careful deliberation, and the communists, who were newcomers in the political labour movement and were easily inflammable and lacked discipline:

Those who experienced the years of disruption will at once agree that from September to December 1920, from the split in the Czech social democracy to the Congress of Tours – via the split in the German Independent Socialist Party at Halle – one and the same phenomenon was observable everywhere: the majority of the new and raw recruits to socialism voted for joining the Moscow International, whilst the majority of the older socialists voted against it. And in 1921, when the French C.G.T. was being dragged into a split, we again saw the collision of these 'two masses'.¹²

The first hypothesis proved untenable for the largest communist party outside the Soviet Union before 1933: the German KPD (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*). The social composition of this party actually differed less from that of the SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) than the labour aristocracy theory would imply, although important differences did exist between the two parties.¹³

Regarding the other hypothesis, the empirical research has yielded more positive results. Evidence shows that members of communist parties in a variety of countries tended to be younger (on average) than members of social democratic parties.¹⁴ Nevertheless, this point should not be overemphasized, as many 'unruly' elements of the labour movement who were attracted to communism were far from inexperienced, having participated for a considerable time in older (that is, social anarchist or revolutionary syndicalist) movements.¹⁵

More generally, the explanatory value of rather simple causal relationships, such as those suggested above, is questionable. For the moment, a multivariate approach is probably preferable.¹⁶ Available data on the social composition of the members and voters – the number of studies on this issue is gradually increasing¹⁷ – suggest that communist parties especially attracted workers concerned with the immediate future and therefore interested in quick results. Whether it was the relative youth of the members, the overrepresentation of occupational groups known for their strike-prone nature (such as agricultural day labourers, construction workers, dockworkers and metalworkers), or

syndicalist influences, everything in the early 1920s reflects this single common characteristic – great social impatience.¹⁸

Broad Contexts

The organizational, political and psychological influences described above that determined the communist parties' initial success appear to distort the issue. *Why* did the combination of social, political and social-psychological procedures to promote their success exist in some countries and not in others? *Why* was the impatience in some countries greater than in others after 1917–18? And *why* did some communist parties manage to take advantage of this impatience, while others were unable to do so? So far, historical research has not covered these issues in sufficient detail.¹⁹

To my knowledge, at least one debate has a broader scholarly significance – namely, that resulting from Det Norske Arbeiderparti's brief membership of the Comintern and concerning the Norwegian workers' movement's radicalism during the early decades of the twentieth century. The discussion was based on a 1922 study by Edvard Bull Sr, who revealed the contrast between the moderate Danish and somewhat less moderate Swedish workers movements on the one hand and the Norwegian movement on the other. He ascribed this discrepancy to the different speeds of industrialization:

The development in Norway has progressed with a speed much faster than the tempo in the other two countries. In the course of half a generation, there has been created a new industrial working class, without class tradition, and these new worker masses stand confronted by huge concerns with strong capital bases. ... The sudden disruption of a traditional peasant society and the foundation of industrial centres in proximity to the new hydro-electric power sources have brought forth a working class which is more open for revolutionary ideas than the older, more slowly developing classes, in the two neighbouring countries.²⁰

Thirty years later, this statement received international publicity through the work of Walter Galenson²¹ and has been called the Bull–Galenson hypothesis ever since. During the 1970s, it became the subject of a lively debate which was initiated in two substantive and sophisticated studies by William M. Lafferty, who provided an alternative explanation involving multiple causes.²² This debate certainly does generate ideas for broader comparative studies.

Relevant ideas and hypotheses appear, in particular, in the work of the late Stein Rokkan who tried to show that any explanation for the structures of various European party systems requires considering the tremendous societal conflicts that have occurred since the sixteenth century – that is, their beginning, their 'solution' and their overall timing.²³ Equally important are selected studies by Seymour M. Lipset, in part related to Rokkan's work, ascribing working-class radicalism to the rigidity of status demarcation lines and the responses of economic and political elites to working-class demands.²⁴ Additional food for thought appears in the work of Pierre Birnbaum, who emphasizes modes of political centralization – that is, the institutionalization,

differentiation and autonomy of states²⁵ – and in that of Göran Therborn, who focuses on the development of ‘working-class capacities,’ as he calls them.²⁶ All these authors do, however, specialize in other areas than the establishment of communist parties and tend to take a rather abstract approach. To appreciate their insights, labour historians will inevitably need to ‘interpret’ this research.²⁷

Whatever results future research may yield, greater insight into early communist parties will require placing their development in a broad historical context. According to Gramsci’s *The Modern Prince*, ‘[to] write the history of a party, means nothing less than to write the general history of a country from a monographic viewpoint, in order to highlight a particular aspect of it’.²⁸

Notes

- 1 This term is from Anderson, Perry (1981), ‘Communist Party History’, in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 145–56. My analysis does not cover the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or its predecessors.
- 2 Stinchcombe, Arthur (1965), ‘Social Structure and Organizations’, in James G. March (ed.), *Handbook of Organizations*, Chicago: Rand-McNally, pp. 142–93 at p. 154.
- 3 The notion of the ‘initial solution’ has been developed in Scoville, James G. (1973), ‘Some Determinants of the Structure of Labor Movements’, in Adolf Sturmthal and James G. Scoville (eds), *The International Labor Movement in Transition*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, pp. 58–78 at p. 74. An attempt to apply this notion in communist historiography may be found in van der Linden, Marcel and Wormer, Joost (1988), ‘The End of a Tradition. Structural Developments and Trends in Dutch Communism’, *Journal of Communist Studies*, 4, pp. 78–87.
- 4 This hypothesis is far from new. For example, see Greene, Thomas H. (1971), ‘The Electorates of Nonruling Communist Parties’, *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 4, pp. 68–103. Lazitch and Drachkovitch have also reached the conclusion that the communists were ‘condemned to remain a splinter group of no political importance’ in places where they did not succeed in reaching the masses through the social democratic party or the trade unions – as in Britain, Belgium, and Austria. Lazitch, Branko and Drachkovitch, Milorad M. (1972), *Lenin and the Comintern*, vol. 1, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, p. 217.
- 5 Laulajainen, Pertti (1979), ‘Some Aspects of the Division of the Finnish Working Class after the Civil War. A Research Note’, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 2 (1), pp. 53–64.
- 6 Annie Kriegel has advanced a hypothesis along these lines ascribing the successful establishment of the Parti Communiste Français to its very specific timing: *after* the partial electoral defeat of November 1919 and the total failure of the strikes in the spring of 1920, but *before* the defeat of the Red Army in Warsaw and the subsidence of the international wave of revolutionary spirit. Her assumption that this timing was purely coincidental renders her statement subject to debate: ‘... the socialist split in France was not only a completely accidental result of the circumstances that prevailed in France and throughout Europe, but was also a coincidental outcome – in a more figurative sense – of its own modalities.’ Kriegel, Annie (1964), *Aux origines du communisme français 1914–1920*, 2 vols, Paris: Mouton, 2, pp. 867–68. Kriegel’s hypothesis has met with considerable disagreement, including especially, ‘Débat: la naissance du P.C.F. et les traditions ouvrières’, *Cahiers d’histoire de l’Institut Maurice Thorez*, New Series, 3 (1973),

- pp. 152–82; Robert, Jean-Louis (1980), 'Nouveaux éléments sur les origines du P.C.F.', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut de Recherches Marxistes*, 3, pp. 8–30; Bourderon, Roger et al. (1981), *Le P.C.F. Etapes et problèmes, 1920–1972*, Paris: Editions Sociales; Pennetier, Claude (1982), *Le socialisme dans le Cher 1851–1921*, La Charité and Paris: Ed. Delayance. Also see Hobsbawm, Eric J. (1973), *Revolutionaries. Contemporary Essays*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, ch. 3, and Bodin, Louis (1975), 'De Tours à Villeurbanne: pour une lecture renouvelée de l'histoire du Parti Communiste Français', *Annales E.S.C.*, New Series, 30, pp. 279–96.
- 7 Greene, Thomas H. (1973), 'Non-ruling Communist Parties and Political Adaptation', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 6, pp. 331–61 at p. 333.
 - 8 'While, in Britain, the Government had met the post-war crisis by devising a major programme of legislative reform, by seeking to involve the trade union leadership more closely into national decision-making, by deploying its influence to reduce industrial conflict through negotiation and compromise and by developing institutional procedures for defusing conflict in industry, the French Government had sought to preserve intact the pre-war bourgeois order with the fewest possible concessions. Setting itself against significant legislative reform and using its power to help shatter the strength of the trade unions, it facilitated the growth of Communist support through undermining the credibility of a strategy premised on the possibility of achieving significant social reforms within the existing institutional order.' Gallie, Duncan (1983), *Social Inequality and Class Radicalism in France and Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 250.
 - 9 Werner, M. [Sifrin, A.] (1927), 'De vooruitzichten van het Europeesche kommunisme', *De Socialistische Gids*, 7, pp. 561–75 at p. 562.
 - 10 In some cases (such as in parts of Eastern Europe and some colonies and semi-colonies), the question of nationality appears to have been an additional factor. This issue could alternatively help or hinder the communist movement.
 - 11 Statements of this position may be found in Zinov'ev, Grigorij (1920), *Vojna i krizis socializma*, Peterburg: Gosizdat, esp. pp. 292–335 and Jablonski (1929), 'Ein Jahrzehnt Kommunistische Internationale', *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, 3, pp. 177–91.
 - 12 Laurat, Lucien (1940), *Marxism and Democracy*, London: Gollancz, pp. 124–25.
 - 13 Flechtheim, Ossip K. (1969), *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt (reprint: Hamburg: Junius, 1996), pp. 311–21; Wunderer, Hartmann (1975), 'Materialien zur Soziologie der Mitgliedschaft und Wählerschaft der KPD zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik', *Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Marxschen Theorie*, 5, pp. 257–81.
 - 14 For example, see Kriegel, *Aux origines du communisme français*, vol. 2, pp. 837–38; Wheeler, Robert F. (1973–74), 'German Labor and the Comintern: A Problem of Generations?', *Journal of Social History*, 7, pp. 304–21; Martinelli, Renzo (1977), *Il Partito Comunista d'Italia 1921–1926: politica e organizzazione*, Rome: Editori Riuniti, p. 88. A similar observation was made by Neil McInnes, who wrote that 'the socialist parties lost many of their youthful adherents to communism, which has generally been a younger movement'. See McInnes, N. (1967), 'The Labour Movement', in idem, *The Impact of the Russian Revolution 1917–1967. The Influence of Bolshevism on the World outside Russia*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 32–133 at p. 58.
 - 15 Amdur, Kathryn E. (1987), 'La tradition révolutionnaire entre syndicalisme et communisme dans la France de l'entre-deux-guerres', *Le Mouvement Social*, 139, pp. 37–50; Peterson, Larry (1984), 'Revolutionary Socialism and Industrial Unrest in the Era of the Winnipeg Strike. The Origins of Communist Labour Unionism in Europe and North America', *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 13, pp. 115–31. Additional information can be found in van der Linden, Marcel and Thorpe, Wayne (eds) (1990), *Revolutionary Syndicalism. An International Perspective*, Aldershot: Gower.

- 16 Dallin, Alexander (1978), 'The Bases of Communist Support. Pre-Theoretical Approaches', in Hannelore Horn, Alexander Schwan and Thomas Weingartner (eds), *Sozialismus in Theorie und Praxis. Festschrift für Richard Löwenthal*, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, pp. 414–40 at 431.
- 17 In addition to Flechtheim's and Wunderer's publications, see Girault, Jacques (ed.) (1977), *Sur l'implantation du Parti Communiste Français dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, Paris: Editions Sociales; Kirby, David (1988), 'New Wine in Old Vessels? The Finnish Socialist Workers' Party, 1919–1923', *Slavonic and East European Studies Review*, 66, pp. 426–45; and Stutje, Jan Willem (1993), 'Tussen eenheid en afzondering. De CPH in de jaren twintig', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 19, pp. 463–88.

There are now also several highly perceptive local and regional studies, including Masulli, Ignazio (1973), 'Il movimento operaio e contadino e le origine del partito comunista nel Bolognese', *Studi Storici*, 14, pp. 185–231; Omnès, Jacques (1980), 'Naissance et apprentissage du P.C.F. en Mayenne', *Cahiers d'Histoire de l'Institut de Recherches Marxistes*, 3, pp. 92–146; Bevilacqua, Piero (1981), 'Origine e peculiarità dell'organizzazione comunista nel Mezzogiorno 1921–1926', *Annali Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, 21, pp. 935–56; Neuhausser-Wespy, Ulrich (1981), *Die KPD in Nordbayern 1919–1933. Ein Beitrag zur Regional- und Lokalgeschichte des deutschen Kommunismus*, Nuremberg: Stadtarchiv; Stovall, Tyler (1989), 'French Communism and Suburban Development. The Rise of The Paris Red Belt', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24, pp. 437–60; Campbell, Alan (1992), 'Communism in the Scottish Coalfields, 1920–1936. A Comparative Analysis of Implantation and Rejection', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 18, 168–89; and Peterson, Larry (1993), *German Communism, Workers' Protest, and Labor Unions. The Politics of the United Front in Rhineland-Westphalia 1920–1924*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press.

A 'question seldom asked' (Rosalyn Baxandall) refers to the role of women in early communist parties, which, according to all available data, were male-dominated, like virtually all other working-class parties around that time. Scarce research on this topic includes Kontos, Silvia (1979), *Die Partei kämpft wie ein Mann. Frauenpolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt am Main and Basel: Roter Stern and Stroemfeld; Gosse, Van (1991), '"To Organize in Every Neighborhood, in Every Home". The Gender Politics of American Communists Between the Wars', *Radical History Review*, 50, pp. 150–67. Aurelia Camparini has written two essays on women's politics during the early days of the Comintern: (1974), 'Il movimento femminile nei primi anni della Internazionale Comunista (1919–1921)', *Movimento Operaio et Socialista*, 20, pp. 49–72; and (1976), 'Fronte Unico e questione femminile nella Terza Internazionale (1922–1925)', *Movimento Operaio et Socialista*, 22, pp. 363–88.

- 18 Here too, unfounded generalizations should be avoided. In her remarkable book *Aufstand der Avantgarde. Die Märzaktion der KPD*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 1986, Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten showed that the revolutionary impatience of KPD members varied from one region to another.
- 19 Considerable material for performing a comparative analysis of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary conditions (in Europe) from 1917–1920 has appeared over the past three decades; actual analysis, however, remains largely a *desideratum*. Among others, see Bertrand, Charles L. (ed.) (1977), *Revolutionary Situations in Europe, 1917–1922. Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary*, Montreal: Interuniversity Centre for European Studies; Cronin, James E. and Sirianni, Carmen (eds) (1983), *Work, Community, and Power. The Experience of Labor in Europe and America, 1900–1925*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Schmitt, Hans A. (ed.) (1988), *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917–23*, Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia; Haimson, Leopold and Sapelli, Giulio (eds) (1992), *Strikes, Social Conflict and the First World War. An International Perspective*, Milan: Feltrinelli; Wrigley, Chris (ed.) (1993), *Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe*

- 1917–1920, London: Routledge; and a number of essays in Haimson, Leopold H. and Tilly, Charles (eds) (1989), *Strikes, Wars, and Revolutions in an International Perspective. Strike Waves in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 20 Bull, Edvard (1922), *Den Skandinaviske Arbeiderbevegelse 1914–1920*, Kristiania: DNA, p. 4; idem (1922), 'Die Entwicklung der Arbeiterbewegung in den drei skandinavischen Ländern', *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, **10**, pp. 329–61 at p. 330.
 - 21 Galenson, Walter (1952), 'Scandinavia', in idem (ed.), *Comparative Labor Movements*, New York: Prentice-Hall, pp. 104–72. See also Galenson's (1949), *Labor in Norway*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949; and idem (1952), *The Danish System of Labor Relations*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
 - 22 Lafferty, William M. (1971), *Economic Development and the Response of Labor in Scandinavia. A Multi-Level Analysis*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; idem (1974), *Industrialization, Community Structure, and Socialism. An Ecological Analysis of Norway, 1875–1924*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. The debate continued in *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelse historie*: see Fure, Odd-Bjørn (1976), 'Synspunkter og historieteoretiske tendenser i forskningen om den norske arbeiderklasse og -bevegelse i den radikale fase 1918–1933', **1**, pp. 29–62; Lafferty, William M. (1977), 'Industrialisering og radikalisme. En kort kommentar', **1**, pp. 199–208; Bjørgum, Jorunn (1977), 'Industrialisering og radikalisme. Replik til William M. Lafferty', **2**, pp. 131–42; and Fure, Odd-Bjørn (1978), 'Edv. Bulls artikkel om radikaliseringen av norsk arbeiderbevegelse – teoretisk status', **1**, pp. 137–41. See also Nilson, Sten Sparre (1981), 'Labor Insurgency in Norway. The Crisis of 1917–1920', *Social Science History*, **5**, pp. 393–416.
 - 23 There are four main conflicts: (i) the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, which revolved around the battle over the national and international significance of religion; (ii) the national revolution, which focused on the issue of secular versus clerical control over mass education; (iii) the commercial revolution, which set the new bourgeoisie against the interests of the landed upper class; and (iv) the social issue, which arose from contrasts between members of the new working class and their employers. Rokkan believed that the historical configurations arising from the first three conflicts were essential factors for the method of resolution for the fourth conflict. See Rokkan, Stein and Lipset, Seymour M. (1967), 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments. An Introduction', in Lipset and Rokkan (eds), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments. Cross-National Perspectives*, New York: Free Press, pp. 1–64; Rokkan, Stein (1968), 'The Structuring of Mass Politics in the Smaller European Democracies. A Developmental Typology', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, **10**, pp. 173–210. See also Flora, Peter (1981), 'Stein Rokkans Makro-Modell der politischen Entwicklung Europas. Ein Rekonstruktionsversuch', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, **33**, pp. 397–436, esp. pp. 428–34.
 - 24 For a summary of his prolific work on this issue, see Lipset, Seymour Martin (1983), 'Radicalism or Reformism? The Sources of Working-Class Politics', *American Political Science Review*, **77**, pp. 1–18. Research by Lipset's student Gregory M. Luebbert, who died at a young age is also of interest. See Luebbert, Gregory M. (1991), *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy. Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press; although it does not discuss communist parties in great detail (pp. 165, 195, 218–22, 239–40, 261–62, 268, 283, 293–94), it does contain several more general relevant observations and hypotheses.
 - 25 Among others, see Birnbaum, Pierre (1982), *La Logique de l'Etat*, Paris: Fayard; idem (1988), *States and Collective Action. The European Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Select main ideas are summarized in idem (1986),

- 'States, Ideologies and Collective Action in Western Europe', in Ali Kazançigil (ed.), *The State in Global Perspective*, Aldershot: Gower/UNESCO, pp. 232–49.
- 26 For example, Therborn, Göran (1983), 'Why Some Classes Are More Successful Than Others', *New Left Review*, **138**, May–June, pp. 37–55. Cf. Lembcke, Jerry (1987), 'Class and Class Capacities. A Problem of Organizational Efficiency', in Rhonda F. Levine and Jerry Lembcke (eds), *Recapturing Marxism. An Appraisal of Recent Trends in Sociological Theory*, New York: Praeger, pp. 64–95.
- 27 Bohn, David E. (1986), 'The Failure of the Radical Left in Switzerland. A Preliminary Study', *Comparative Political Studies*, **19**, pp. 71–103 initiates such an interpretation from a political science perspective. This study uses several hypotheses, including some by Rokkan, to explain the weakness of radicalism in the Swiss workers' movement.
- 28 Gramsci, Antonio (1973), *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart, p. 151.

Chapter 7

Metamorphoses of European Social Democracy (1870–2000)¹

Introduction

International comparisons draw attention either to the similarities or to the differences between cases. In the last two decades of the twentieth century a great many comparative studies on European social democracy were published,² of which most address the *differences* between national parties (especially with respect to electoral results).³ Any systematic focus on *similarities* is often based on the assumption that the area of common ground is an electoral ‘decline’ in the movement, which is believed to require explanation.⁴ Obviously, some studies combine the two approaches, in which case the guiding question is: why is the electoral decline more serious in some parties than in others?⁵ Contrary to these dominant perspectives, I aim – based on a historical long view – to identify major similarities in European social democracy’s long-term development, without presuming a secular electoral decline.

For years, supporters and adversaries have been proclaiming that social democracy is doomed. In the late 1970s Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm asserted that the Labour Party’s ‘forward march’ had ground to a halt.⁶ A few years later, liberal sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf wrote that social democracy had outlived its purpose.⁷ Political scientists observed a general decline in election results.⁸ Even prominent members of the inner circles occasionally announced the final stage in social democracy.

Closer examination shows these assessments to be heavily exaggerated. Admittedly, social democracy has been through rough times since the 1970s. In 1976, the Swedish party was forced into the opposition after 54 years of near-continuous government participation. The British Labour Party suffered severely under Margaret Thatcher. Over the course of two elections the Norwegian party declined from 42.3 per cent (1977) to 30.4 per cent (1985). The Italian party collapsed altogether (1992: 13.6 per cent; 1994: 2.0 per cent).

On the other hand, election victories continue. In 1982 Swedish voters restored the social democratic party to government; in 1982 the PSOE obtained nearly half the Spanish vote; the British general election of 1997 resulted in a landslide victory for the Labour Party. Accordingly, *instability* is more prevalent than irreversible decline. In this respect, the Finnish researcher Risto Sänkiäho has observed a shift from diffuse to specific support. Diffuse support

means that people vote for social democracy out of party loyalty, possibly because of their left-wing tradition or because the party has always done so much for 'common folk'. Specific support involves examining whether the party supports the 'right causes' in each election:

Thus the Social Democratic parties cannot assume that they will be able to hold onto their traditional constituencies simply because they are the traditional representatives of the working class or because of what they have done for workers in the past. Increasingly, they will have to respond to specific voter demands to maintain their support.⁹

This general erosion of traditional voter loyalty among all parties has resulted in an army of 'floating voters' that has expanded steadily throughout Western Europe since the 1970s. Sometimes the trend benefits social democracy; at other times it places the party at a disadvantage. Over the long term, however, the share of the votes cast in favour of social democracy has not changed dramatically. Table 7.1 shows that while the parties peaked in the 1940s and 1950s, they did not lapse into general decline thereafter.¹⁰

The alleged crisis in social democracy primarily concerns the changing relationship between the party and its rank and file. As these changes have appeared in many different countries, they should be attributed not to 'mistakes' by party leadership but to broader social transformations. I will explore this expansive combination of factors in the following paragraphs. First, I will interpret the history of nine parties in countries north of the Alps (Scandinavia, West Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland). Since the First World War these parties have never been entirely illegal or have been so only very briefly (with Germany as the worst case, where they were suppressed for over 12 years), have experienced fairly continuous development, and are associated with highly advanced welfare states.

Table 7.1 Average electoral results of European social democratic parties, 1920–99

	1920–29	1930–39	1940–49	1950–59	1960–69	1970–79	1980–89	1990–99
Austria	39.3	41.1*	41.7	43.3	43.3	50.0	45.4	37.2
Belgium	36.7	33.1	30.7	35.9	31.0	26.6	28.0	23.3
Denmark	34.5	43.9	39.1	40.2	39.1	33.6	30.9	36.0
Germany	29.3	21.2	29.2*	30.3	39.4	44.2	39.4	36.9
Great Britain	32.7	33.6	48.0*	46.3	46.1	39.1	29.2	39.4
France	19.1	20.2	20.9	15.1	15.9	21.0	35.3	20.5
Italy	24.7*	–	[20.7]	13.5	13.8	9.7	12.9	7.9
Netherlands	22.0	21.7	27.0	30.7	25.8	28.6	31.0	27.0
Norway	25.5	38.0	43.4	47.5	45.5	38.8	37.4	36.0
Portugal	–	–	–	–	–	35.2	27.6	39.3
Spain	–	23.1	–	–	–	30.4	44.1	38.2
Sweden	36.0	43.8	48.8	45.6	48.4	43.7	44.5	39.8
Switzerland	25.5	27.5	27.4	26.5	25.1	24.1	20.7	20.9
Average	29.6	31.6	34.3	34.1	34.0	32.7	32.8	31.0

Note: *Only one election during this period.

After describing the pattern in Northern Europe, I will examine its prevalence in the Southern European parties in Spain, France and Italy. The development of these parties has been far more turbulent, as borne out in part by the deep crises in the French Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) in 1920 and during the 1960s, their extended repression in Portugal (1926–74) and Spain (1939–76), and the recent disintegration of Craxi's Partito Socialista Italiana (PSI) in Italy.¹¹ I will not cover Eastern European social democracy, which – except for a brief interruption in some cases during the late 1940s – has suffered particularly extended repression and now functions under very different social and economic conditions than its counterpart organizations in Western Europe.

The Rise and First Metamorphosis in Northern Europe

Most North European social democratic parties arose during the economic downturn (1873–95) at the end of the nineteenth century: consecutively, Germany in 1875, Denmark in 1876, Belgium in 1885, Norway in 1887, Switzerland in 1888, Austria and Sweden in 1889, and the Netherlands in 1894. The only country where such a party was established later was Great Britain (where the actual party was consolidated only in 1918). The parties' first and foremost objective was universal suffrage on the assumption that its achievement would enable fundamental social change with a majority of the votes. In this respect, social democracy may be described as a movement pursuing civil emancipation for the working class.¹²

Contrary to an old myth, the Western European social democratic parties were not revolutionary before the First World War. Their policy was based on a combination of two elements: a basic programme (universal suffrage, good social services and so on) and the ultimate socialist objective (which tended to play a minor role in practical considerations). A strategy for ensuring a logical and concrete link between both elements was lacking. The parties did not consider that the conquest of power which they aimed for depended on taking the right initiatives at the right time but that it was the historically inevitable outcome of continually increasing support from workers and associated classes.¹³ Accordingly, *reformist workers' parties* characterized this stage.

In all the countries considered here, universal male suffrage was enacted, with the help of agrarian allies or the First World War, by 1919 at the latest.¹⁴ Having accomplished their primary goal, the social democratic parties then spent a while resting on their laurels. The economic decline during the interbellum and especially the second long economic downturn, which began in 1929 and led to unprecedented unemployment, initially confounded the parties. The three Swedish minority governments of the 1920s despaired:

Despite their efforts to fashion a more humane social policy to relieve the worst miseries of the unemployed, the social democrats also assumed that industry could only take up the slack in the labor market if substantial wage reductions were

achieved across the board. Nor did they question the hallowed principles of holding government spending to a minimum and of achieving balanced budgets.

This reflected the leadership's ambiguity:

They accepted the Marxist critique of capitalism's 'irrationality' at the macro-economic level but at the same time they strove in practice to restore a 'harmonious' capitalist economy in which presumably all resources, including labor, are efficiently allocated.¹⁵

A similar sense of confusion prevailed in the first two British Labour governments (1924 and 1929–31) and the German coalition government headed by the social democrat Hermann Müller (1928–30).¹⁶ Notwithstanding the loyal support (despite some losses among the German and British parties), a clear perspective was lacking. The remarks by François Sainte, the delegate from Liège, at the 1933 congress of the Belgian Workers Party were typical: 'A few years ago, their [the workers'] faith in you was limitless. No longer. They are still on our side, but trust was succeeded by habit.'¹⁷

Two convictions characterized the parties' search for a different political practice. First, the disorderly nature of unbridled capitalist competition needed to be replaced by a systematic planned economy.¹⁸ This view was inspired not only by the long-standing discussions about nationalizing essential companies but also by the implementation of five-year plans in the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Second, supporters increasingly believed in anti-cyclical economic intervention by the state – though often attributed exclusively to Keynes' *General Theory* (1936), this opinion prevailed among several economists (social democratic ones as well as others) around 1930–32.²⁰ Both schools of thought appeared individually or in combination in a wealth of publications.²¹

The *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm* (employment programme), launched by the German social democratic trade union federation ADGB in 1932, was an early and important attempt at developing a proto-Keynesian policy. This plan (also known as the WTB Plan after its founders Woytinski, Tarnow and Baade) considerably increased state spending in such areas as housing construction and road-building, which required funding through loans and strict price control along with an effective 'customs and import policy'. These measures reduced unemployment dramatically while stimulating purchasing power and the economy. The SPD disapproved of this forward-oriented, anti-cyclical policy proposal because of its essential political contradictions during these years: on the one hand, the programme called for a consistently 'anti-capitalist' stand favouring the wage-earners and the unemployed; on the other hand, the Nazi threat forced social democrats to tolerate the conservative Brüning cabinet to avert greater evil. The ADGB Plan, however, was neither 'anti-capitalist' nor supportive of the right-wing government in power and thus did not fit this strategy.²²

Soon afterwards, the new national socialist potentates crushed both the SPD and the ADGB. Hitler subsequently devised an economic policy, which, strangely enough, corresponded in many respects with the principles of the

American President Roosevelt's New Deal: extend public spending to encompass civil public works and expand the military apparatus and deficit spending somewhat later.²³ In Sweden, the social democrats (who had formed a coalition government with the Agrarians since 1932) launched a similar policy.²⁴

These changes created a more receptive environment for the ideas of the Belgian social democrat Hendrik de Man, who advocated a plan that would boost the state apparatus, active economic policy, nationalizations and the like. The social democratic parties embraced 'Labour Plans' in Belgium (1933), the Netherlands (1935) and Switzerland (1935).²⁵

Initially, the new ideas elicited varying measures of protest in different parties. While the anti-cyclical and state-interventionist policy was soon partially accomplished in Sweden, implementation in other countries occurred mostly after 1945. Any reservations about social Keynesianism largely disappeared during the Second World War, which demonstrated the economic and military force that more active government involvement could generate, especially in Great Britain and the United States.

Social Keynesianism's attraction soon proved strong, even irresistible. The old reformism, which had assigned first priority to workers' interests in its basic programme and as its ultimate objective and had considered capital an adversary from which progressively greater concessions were to be exacted, made way for a political practice that pursued *systematic cooperation* with that very capital. From a social democratic perspective, Keynesianism offered four significant advantages:

- 1 It seemed to allow control over the economy via the state from above. Reconciliation between socialism and the market became possible by managing the unemployment rate and the income distribution notwithstanding the perpetuation of private ownership of the means of production.
- 2 It justified the egalitarian outlook by showing that increasing consumption among broad segments of the population stimulated economic growth.
- 3 It provided for a fast capital accumulation *and* reconciliation between entrepreneurs and workers.
- 4 It enabled governments – without disrupting the economic balance – to spend part of the social product on expanding social services.

The transition to Keynesianism did not immediately carry over into the programme: 'It is one thing for social democrats in government to adopt Keynesian politics – usually quiet and without fanfare. It was quite a different proposition to adopt an ideology of Keynesian social democracy.'²⁶ In 1944, the Swedes, who had taken the vanguard in practice as well, replaced their old programme from 1920 (which mentioned 'exploitation' and 'class struggle') with a text that considered the party's presence in the government. The Danish revision to the programme in 1945 derived most of its inspiration from the writings of Keynes, Myrdal and Hansson as well as from Beveridge's social liberalism. The Austrian party discarded the Marxist elements in 1958; the Swiss, German and Dutch parties followed suit a year later.²⁷

The practical and theoretical adoption of social Keynesianism dramatically changed the nature of the social democratic parties. They had evolved from reformist workers parties into *reform parties with worker support*. They even abandoned the idea of a socialist ultimate objective beyond capitalism. In Sweden, for example, the discussion about the 1944 programme was 'the last time that leading members of the party used the term "socialism"',²⁸

Directly elaborating on this statement, while the social democratic parties had achieved a reconciliation with capital, they had not become 'regular' bourgeois parties. Even after their transformation, their social, organizational and cultural nature remained distinctive with respect to many other parties. During their reformist stage, the parties had established a broad network of affiliated organizations everywhere: sports associations, women's clubs, organizations for nature lovers, consumer cooperatives, newspapers, theatre groups and the like.²⁹ The parties obviously maintained close ties with the social democratic trade unions as well. Only Great Britain deviated from the norm. Although such organizations existed there as well, they were less *directly* linked to the party than in other countries.³⁰ This old network remained provisionally intact after the metamorphosis and benefited party stability immeasurably. Provided that the party not only influenced its members in purely political respects but also controlled their daily life in countless other ways, the bond between the 'foundation elements' and the 'upper crust' remained rock solid. Theo Pirker aptly noted that German social democracy long

... withstood the most violent literary and factional strife, prevailed over breakaway factions, and carried out the most unlikely reunifications because the workers movement was not merely contingent upon theory and ideology but was an extensive network of associations and relationships between individuals and groups within and outside the working class.³¹

Equally important was the relative political continuity in the years preceding and following the first metamorphosis. Herbert Kitschelt perceives a common link in 'the commitment to strengthening centralized mechanisms of political administration as a key method of improving the organization of society'.³² In this respect, social democracy's second stage of development differs both from liberalism (which emphasizes the market and voluntary agreements) and from conservatism (which highlights primary groups, direct contacts between fellow citizens, and so on).

Capitalism's unprecedented growth until the early 1970s, social Keynesian policy's corresponding apparent 'fairness',³³ and the cohesion of social democratic networks generally ensured reasonable success for the social democratic parties, despite their diverging fates.

The Second Metamorphosis

The socioeconomic factors responsible for social democracy's relative success in its second stage eventually backfired. The extended and propitious capital

accumulation of the 1950s and 1960s dramatically altered public regard for the operating environment of the parties, gradually at first and then spectacularly from the early 1970s onwards. At least five major changes occurred:

- 1 Economic internationalization, manifested by the continuously growing importance of cross-border trade, migration, and capital transfers, reduced the control of national governments over their economies.³⁴ Belgian social democratic minister Louis Tobback described the new situation as follows:

Ministers no longer possess the instruments to define their national economies. We lack a hammer. We lack a sickle. We are even without a saw. Inside Belgium – or the Netherlands – interest rates are beyond our control. So is inflation. So are energy prices. ... Belgian ministers today have as little power as Antwerp's aldermen thirty years ago. While our hands are not entirely tied, our potential range of achievements is modest. We can distribute umbrellas against the rain and screens against the sun. We cannot, however, determine what the weather *will be*.³⁵

- 2 The declining, and in some cases even stagnant or briefly negative economic growth, which made its first worldwide post-war appearance during the oil crisis of 1973, considerably reduced the share of the social product available for redistribution. Decreasing tax revenues and increasing government spending gave rise to a fiscal crisis. As a result, painful cutbacks became inevitable within the system's logic.³⁶
- 3 Class composition in the highly developed capitalist countries changed: the 'traditional' working class's share in the labour force decreased progressively from the 1950s onwards, while 'new' groups of wage dependants rapidly expanded.³⁷
- 4 Post-war capitalism brought about dramatic cultural shifts. In addition to a historically unique standard of living among large segments of the wage-dependent population, the rapid increase in purchasing power led to essential sociocultural and psychological changes. An entirely new type of individualization became apparent, women and young adults acquired a new awareness of their role in society and so on.
- 5 From the 1960s onwards, the unforeseen and negative effects of the turbulent economic growth, such as the dramatic rise in pollution, gradually became more obvious.

These changes carried over to the social democratic parties – not at equal rates everywhere but nevertheless in a single direction. The sociocultural and economic reversal toppled both 'pillars' of the social Keynesian stage, as the networks fell to pieces and social Keynesianism became less feasible.

The *social democratic networks* disintegrated because the affiliated organizations collapsed or became autonomous – a process that penetrated a variety of fields. The usual singing, drama, sports and nature associations were forced into a losing battle against individualization and the new popular culture; they lost touch with the younger generation, exchanged their traditional repertoire for more modern practices, or abandoned their direct association with the parties entirely.³⁸

The advent of television and the progressive concentration in daily newspapers and other sectors forced many social democratic media to choose between popularization and commercial ruin. Sweden experienced the so-called 'death of the press' during the 1960s.³⁹ In the 1970s Belgium's 'socialist press, especially that which depends directly on the BSP, encountered tremendous difficulties'.⁴⁰ Germany's last major social democratic daily (the *Hamburger Morgenpost*) became commercial in 1980.⁴¹ In the Netherlands the national daily *Het Vrije Volk* was first reduced to a regional paper and subsequently discontinued through a merger.⁴² Similar processes occurred in other countries as well.⁴³ The disappearance of other organizations from the social democratic network, such as youth groups, paralleled this trend. Overall, the social democratic foundations crumbled considerably between the late 1950s and the late 1970s. Sometimes party policy was partially responsible, as in Denmark, where the party knowingly furthered the dissolution of its own subculture.⁴⁴

The shifts in class structure changed the social composition of members and voters. Regarding Sweden, Diane Sainsbury wrote in 1991 that '[the] class composition of the SAP has become much more heterogeneous during the past three decades'.⁴⁵ In the 1970s the Austrian party welcomed a massive influx from the 'new middle classes' (some of whom abandoned the party again in the 1980s).⁴⁶ Moreover, involvement decreased among the party's rank and file. In 1979 an Austrian observer described this change as follows:

The old party, with its magnificent historic sense of duty, the feeling of realizing a long-standing necessity and designing a new world, had highly motivated and idealistic members. ... Traces of this motivation remain. Nevertheless, many members of the SPÖ have been 'de-ideologized' and their personal commitment and participation significantly compromised. Among many members, the primary political motive for joining has made way for interests arising from individual circumstances, such as the expectation of obtaining affordable public housing or professional employment; they have become 'socialists for personal benefit'.⁴⁷

Ten years later, a Norwegian expert observed: 'Today there is very little left of the "special character" of the Labour Party. The vitality previously found at its grassroots is no longer impressive. Its declining membership – as in other parties – prefer television at home to party education in the town hall.'⁴⁸

The consumer cooperatives – threatened by the rapidly expanding department stores, supermarkets and the like – either disintegrated (as, for example, in the Netherlands and Germany) or progressively evolved into true capitalist companies (such as the Swedish KF, where the staff staged several wildcat strikes in the 1970s).⁴⁹

The recession also caused a rift between parties and trade unions. Based on a comparative study, Andrew Taylor concluded:

During the 1980s the traditional social democratic project – full employment, public spending and tripartite politics – was eroded by mass unemployment, industrial restructuring and the rise of the new right. Confronted by electoral difficulties, social democratic parties reassessed their policies and structures, adopting 'market' socialism and jettisoning traditional aspects of social democracy. This led to a

questioning of the trades unions' relationship with the parties and naturally aroused suspicion inside the former.⁵⁰

A striking example of the eroding links concerns the two parties in which union members had automatically been party members in the past: in 1987 the Swedish party decided to abolish this system by the end of 1990 at the latest;⁵¹ in the British Labour Party the abolition of the union 'block vote' implemented in 1993 served the same purpose.⁵²

This last item leads to the second of the progressively collapsing pillars – social Keynesianism. From the mid-1970s onwards, the old policy which pursued 'top-down' redistribution lost much of its credibility. Fritz Scharpf – a commentator known for his moderate views – has concluded that, from the 1970s onwards, full employment was feasible only in the event of *major* concessions to capital (that is, through a 'massive redistribution in favour of capital income').⁵³ If social democracy were to retain its role as a co-trustee of capitalism, albeit with a sense of social commitment, it would have to resort to unpopular measures (for example, cutbacks and rationalization).⁵⁴

Although this list of problems was already quite impressive, more problems awaited: an entire series of *qualitative new political 'issues'* emerged, ranging from the democratization movement and the protests by young adults to the second feminist wave and the environmental issue. These new themes – obviously sources of tremendous concern and insecurity in other established political movements as well – revealed a field of problems for which no convincing answers were available. One example of social democracy's helplessness was the rise of the 'green' political movements, which initially involved extremely tense relations between adherents of the different ideologies.

All these changes are interrelated. The medical term for the pattern is a syndrome, which comprises a collection of concurrent symptoms. The social democratic parties thus faced a great many challenges that had to be met more or less simultaneously. The parties were forced to maintain their reputation as social reformers despite the progressively diminishing policy scope for 'nice things and good deeds'. Traditional centralism had to be reconciled with 'grassroot' democratic movements and feminism with the conventional androcentric culture. Moreover, the environmental movement needed to be taken seriously without abandoning the pursuit of economic growth (the condition for social redistribution in a capitalist context).

In addition to this need to reconcile the myriad conflicting interests, the changed party culture complicated efforts to draft a coherent strategy. This aspect surfaced both in the erosion of the traditional individual network and in internal party relationships. Overall, the bond between the rank and file and the parties weakened. The reduced dedication among the 'regular members' reflects this trend. Another indication is the tremendous increase in the group of voters floating its loyalties from one party to another. Ageing party membership is also relevant. Finally, the decreasing number of members offers a clue: while the decline in some countries (for example, Denmark) started in the 1960s, with other countries following much later (for example, Sweden

from 1984 onwards), the trend is universal.⁵⁵ Moreover, the influence of the proletarian members has virtually disappeared; they account for fewer than ever of the participants in branch meetings and are rarely represented in the party's upper echelons anymore.⁵⁶

It is little wonder that the tremendous weight of all these problems has given rise to widespread dissent and insecurity within social democracy. The parties are undeniably undergoing a second metamorphosis. They are progressively abandoning the stage of reform parties with worker support and are assiduously searching for a new identity.

The Southern Contrast: Two Metamorphoses in One

Two of the three Southern European parties were founded during the Great Depression. Spain's Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) came first, in 1879, followed by the Partito Socialista Italiana (PSI) in 1892. In France the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) emerged somewhat later (in 1905), but resulted from a merger between five movements of which some had been around much longer. Unlike the northern parties, however, the southern ones lacked or lost their own political subculture at the outset.

The PSI probably had the most extensive subculture, including affiliated labour exchanges (*camere del lavoro*), resistance societies, the General Confederation of Labour (CGL), cooperatives, people's universities, and circulating libraries.⁵⁷ The party was part of this subculture but did not serve as an 'organic' core, such as in Germany. A similar situation prevailed with respect to the SFIO, where the network was not directly linked with the party either (despite the sociocultural embeddedness of the political activities in France as well). Although relations with the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and the *bourses du travail* were often strained and several cultural organizations effectively were independent, a measure of affiliation existed between the different activities. In addition to having been associated with its own trade union federation, the UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores), the PSOE, which was relatively weak in its early days, also had a network of *casas del pueblo*, its own press, and women's and youth organizations.⁵⁸ The 'red networks' in Italy and Spain were crushed by the dictators Mussolini and Franco, respectively. Though blessed with longevity, the French subculture became imbued with the communist influence after the party split in 1920.⁵⁹

The southern parties were dominated by intellectuals even more than their counterparts in the North, conceivably because the slower development of the economies in the South meant that the labour movements were proportionately weaker.⁶⁰ The prominence of intellectuals may underlie the factionalism that prevailed in the southern parties as well.⁶¹

Like their counterparts in the North, the three sister parties aimed to operate through parliamentary means; nevertheless (as in Austria in 1934), they were prepared, if necessary, to defend the parliamentary democracy with arms and other 'non-parliamentary' means, as in Spain. The social Keynesian shift

perceptible in the North between the 1930s and the 1950s occurred far later in the South. The CGT accepted Henri de Man's *planisme* in 1934, a minority within the SFIO sympathized with de Man's ideas, and the early government policy of the French Popular Front (1936–37) contained traces of an anti-cyclical policy, but Léon Blum's anti-corporatism and his hostility towards employers nevertheless perpetuated the older reformist policy.⁶²

Marxism long remained the official party ideology in the South. The Italian and Spanish parties upheld these principles until the late 1970s;⁶³ in the 1980s the French socialist rhetoric still 'relied heavily on a series of concepts and terms derived from Marxism'.⁶⁴ This programmatic intransigence is probably attributable to the polarized national political cultures and the relatively strong influence of the competing communist parties.⁶⁵

Whatever the specific explanation for Marxism's persistence might be, the three southern parties appear to have been the 'radical faction' of European social democracy in the 1970s:

In contrast to the northern and central European Socialist parties, the Southern European Socialist Parties were viewed as opening new terrain for struggle and new perspectives that went beyond the welfare state.⁶⁶

The rapid change in course by each of the three parties was therefore all the more surprising.

Marxism was discarded rather emphatically. From 1975 onwards the debate within the PSI about the *alternativa di sinistra* led to an infatuation with the market economy; the Twenty-Ninth Congress (1981) of the PSOE was the 'Spanish Bad Godesberg' and definitively established the party's moderate image; the French party focused progressively on propaganda for concrete measures during the 1980s (Mitterrand's *110 Propositions*). The changes in policy were more important than those in ideology. James Petras wrote of a 'sudden and dramatic ... shift away from social welfare policies'.⁶⁷ In 1981 the French Socialist Party began its administration with radical measures: sweeping nationalizations, major labour reforms, rises in family allowances, early retirement among others. According to Mark Kesselman, however, this highly state-centred policy was a 'socialism without workers',⁶⁸ and thus a heavy-handed technocratic approach. As of June 1982 Mitterrand and his government switched course. Stringent austerity (*rigueur*) became the watchword: 'The franc was devalued, reforms were halted, taxes increased, ambitions for growth scaled back to near zero, and measures taken to de-index wages from inflation.'⁶⁹

After coming to power in 1982, 'the PSOE turned its mind to the types of economic and social reforms that an enlightened conservative party should have undertaken a long time ago'.⁷⁰ Felipe González's government dealt with ongoing problems and the severe economic crisis through myriad austerity measures, the devaluation of the peseta, tax increases and the like. These measures occurred largely at the expense of the working class, 'in terms of wages, the availability of jobs, and the delivery of welfare policies'.⁷¹

The coalition government formed under Prime Minister Bettino Craxi in 1983 tried – initially with some success – to fight inflation, catch up on the balance of payments by devaluating the lire, and reduce the public-sector deficit. Overall, Craxi's economic policies 'largely represented a continuation of those practised – perhaps less effectively – by previous Italian coalition governments'.⁷² The PSI was now 'somewhat to the right of most of the European parties'⁷³ and supported 'the most sustained attack on working-class organization and living standards that Italy had seen for thirty years'.⁷⁴

Thus, the three southern parties appear to have skipped the second metamorphosis, which characterized the northern ones from the 1930s onwards. Without experiencing an extended social Keynesian interlude, the French, Italian and Spanish social democrats proceeded almost directly from the classical-reformist stage to post-Keynesianism.⁷⁵ The obvious question is: how did they bring about this transition?

The underlying cause seems to be the political sociology of the three parties. The organizations were all 'uprooted' in some respects, although they followed very different trajectories. The SFIO lost the majority of its labour support when it split in 1920: 'Denied a solid working-class base by Communist competition, the Socialists were forced to look elsewhere – to other social classes, notably the petty bourgeoisie'.⁷⁶ Thus, the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s were a period of 'the progressive petty-bourgeoisification of the Party's electoral base'.⁷⁷ The absence of a working-class subculture and of ties with a trade union federation, together with a policy that alienated young people from the organization, led to a terminal crisis in the 1960s. The only means for reviving the party was through complete re-establishment. Thus, in May 1969, a new party arose from the ashes of the SFIO: the Parti Socialiste.⁷⁸ Despite electoral successes, however, this organization failed to construct a solid sociological base (that is, it formed no strong links with any major social group). The French socialist electorate is 'structurally unstable because of the weak cultural ties between political socialism and the labour and trade-union movements'⁷⁹, and this shortcoming has probably enabled the party's rapid shifts in policy.

During the transition in 1975–77 the PSOE – despite its old age – became a new party in sociological respects and had to operate under highly unorthodox circumstances. In Northern and Western Europe social democratic parties were initially active outside the parliaments; they established their organizations through mobilization and campaigning, and gained access to executive power at a later stage. Legalized only four months before the 1977 elections, however, the PSOE did not have time to design its organization carefully before entering parliament. This situation had several important consequences. First, intraparlimentary affairs required immediate attention, leading to the neglect of the extraparlimentary organization's establishment. More significantly, the party was compelled to select an electoral strategy. With regard to the Iberian peninsula, Ingrid van Biezen rightly noted that:

With the sudden expansion of the level of participation almost immediately after the collapse of the authoritarian regimes, millions of newly enfranchised voters entered the electoral arena. ... Because of the absence of stable party identities and party

alignments in Spain and Portugal, in combination with the absence of a stable and solid constituency, an expansive electoral strategy may seem to have been the most effective way ... to maximise the number of parliamentary seats. Rather than defending the interests of a specific *classe gardée*, parties will be encouraged to attract as many voters as possible, thereby crossing the boundaries of social or economic divisions in society.⁸⁰

Thus, the PSOE was immediately lured into becoming a catch-all party. This role enabled rapid changes in political course without forfeiting votes. Unlike the French PS, however, the PSOE maintained close ties with a trade union confederation (the UGT), but the party's new policy strained this traditional symbiotic relationship.⁸¹

While participating in governments dominated by the Christian Democrats in the 1960s and 1970s, the Italian PSI was virtually absorbed in the clientelist system. The PSI 'was profoundly changed in its encounter with government', because access to political patronage caused leaders and local activists to become deeply involved in 'clientelism and power-broking'.⁸² Giulio Sapelli has accurately observed that this change reflected the party's weakness: clientelism grew because the party bought support which it could not find in other ways. The collapse of the PSI during the 1990s was attributable to this weakness: its power rested on 'a fragile network of interests bordering on criminality and illegality, dominated by the necessity of establishing consent around individual leaders and not supported by values and a sense of solidarity which might have silenced these interests'.⁸³

European Prospects

In the last three decades of the twentieth century *all* Western European social democratic parties were transformed and, although the areas of emphasis vary between countries, a clear new strategy has yet to emerge anywhere.⁸⁴ Are more general patterns discernible for the years ahead?

One new strategy might involve the pursuit of accelerated European unification in the hope of a new social Keynesianism at a higher level. The basic principle is that forming a European currency union with a common capital market and a European monetary fund might lead to an equilibrium with the capital market for dollars. The chances of more balanced worldwide interest rate fluctuations, capital imports, and exchange ratios would then improve accordingly. The likelihood of such an extended European unification – along with diminishing authority for national governments – are slim in the short or even the medium term, partly because the cost burden is not identical in all European countries; this situation in turn arises from the divergent national labour relationships.⁸⁵ The social democratic parties might nevertheless focus their energies on this course, although practical policy consequences are unlikely to be forthcoming for the time being.

A second strategy might be to encourage share ownership for wage workers employed in private industry. This method would foster social esteem for the consequences of a post-Keynesian policy (pursuing unilateral reinforcement of

the national capital) by turning a share of the working class into 'petty capitalists'. The workers would get their wage contributions back as dividends. As noted by Scharpf, this construction results from 'musing at the drawing board', as international trends are heading in exactly the opposite direction: the imbalance in the distribution of assets keeps growing.⁸⁶ Moreover, such a strategy would require a renewed alliance with the unions and the willingness of employees in all branches of industry to forfeit wages in return for uncertain future dividends – an unlikely scenario.

The remaining third option entails shifting from a 'social' to a 'democratic' policy. In the absence of feasible structural economic improvements for wage dependents, non-material forms of compensation are an option. Kitschelt, a leading analyst in this field, considers this course to be the logical choice: social democracy can secure its future by decreasing its emphasis on centrally regulated redistribution in favour of greater receptiveness to forms of 'direct' and 'plebiscitary' democracy (that is, by integrating more liberal and conservative elements in its strategy):

[The] opportunity for a successful postsocialist reconstitution of socialist parties may have to be sought in a different combination and equilibrium among individual autonomy in market transactions, the spontaneous constitution of collective identities in primary groups or voluntary associations, and centralized social management through public and private bureaucracies. In this equilibrium, political democracy must also be developed in a multiplicity of institutions and forms of influence that social democracy has neglected in the past.⁸⁷

Support for this point of view comes from various sources.⁸⁸ It has the multiple advantages of a strong emphasis on 'individuality', 'liberality' and 'democracy'. In addition to being compatible with today's consumer orientation, this strategy enables coalitions with parties that stress the 'new issues' and distracts public attention from socioeconomic distribution problems.⁸⁹ Accordingly, it might very well portend a new stage in the history of the social democratic parties that would progressively obscure their differences from leftist-liberal movements.⁹⁰

The sole ground for objecting to this scenario is that it will alienate traditional proletarian support even further from the parties. Although large sections of this social group are certainly tempted by certain aspects of a social democratic liberalism, concern for immediate material needs (housing, employment and so on) generally takes precedence. As a result, their estrangement from the social democratic parties will only grow. This process could be beneficial if a shift to the left resulted. However, the lack of a serious alternative to the left of social democracy in any of the countries reviewed here⁹¹ suggests that political indifference is more likely to result, barring the embrace of right-wing populism or even fascism. Consequently, the electoral survival of social democracy might come at a high price.

Notes

- 1 The first draft of this chapter was presented as a paper at the conference 'Nuevos Aspectos en la Historia del Movimiento Obrero', Fundación 1^o de Mayo (Comisiones Obreras), and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 5–6 October 1998. I wish to thank Juan Pan-Montojo, Manuel Pérez Ledesma, and Victor Wallis for their helpful comments.
- 2 The concepts 'social democratic party', 'socialist party' and 'labour party' are used synonymously in this chapter.
- 3 For example, Kitschelt, Herbert (1994), *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 4 For example, Fox Piven, Frances (1991), 'The Decline of Labor Parties. An Overview', in idem (ed.), *Labor Parties in Postindustrial Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 1–19.
- 5 For example, Pontusson, Jonas (1995), 'Explaining the Decline of European Social Democracy', *World Politics*, 47, pp. 495–533.
- 6 Hobsbawm, Eric J. (1981), 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', in Martin Jacques and Francis Mulhern (eds), *The Forward March of Labour Halted?*, London: New Left Books, pp. 1–19. Hobsbawm's text was originally published in 1978.
- 7 Dahrendorf, Ralf (1983), *Die Chancen der Krise. Über die Zukunft des Liberalismus*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, pp. 16–24; idem (1990), *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, London: Times Books, p. 38.
- 8 A critique of relevant literature appears in Armingeon, Klaus (1989), 'Sozialdemokratie am Ende? Die Entwicklung der Macht sozialdemokratischer Parteien im internationalen Vergleich 1945–1988', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 18, pp. 321–45, esp. pp. 322–27.
- 9 Sänkiahio, Risto (1984), 'Political Remobilization in Welfare States', in Russell J. Dalton, Scott C. Flanagan and Paul Allen Beck (eds), *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies. Realignment or Dealignment?*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 73.
- 10 A similar point is made (for the shorter period 1945–90) in Merkel, Wolfgang (1992), 'After the Golden Age. Is Social Democracy Doomed to Decline?', in Christiane Lemke and Gary Marks (eds), *The Crisis of Socialism in Europe*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 136–70 at pp. 139–40.
- 11 The Southern European parties are generally treated as a separate category in the literature. See, for example, Buci-Glucksmann, Christine and Therborn, Göran (1981), *Le défi social-démocrate*, Paris: Maspéro, pp. 30–34; Keman, Hans (1990), 'Social Democracy and the Politics of Welfare Statism', *Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences*, 26, pp. 17–34, 18–25; Sassoon, Donald (1998), 'Fin-de-Siècle Socialism', *New Left Review*, 227, January–February, pp. 88–96 at p. 91. I will not address the parties in Luxembourg and Iceland (these countries are so small that the phenomena reflect a different order of magnitude), Ireland, Greece, and Finland (because of the language barrier), or Portugal (due to lack of sufficient historical work on the pre-Salazar period). I also neglect the history of competing party organizations.
- 12 While a detailed explanation would exceed the scope of this chapter, I recommend distinguishing 'capitalists' from 'capitalism'. I define capitalism as a society ruled by production, distribution, and consumption of commodities; I consider capitalists to be people and institutions that own means of production and purchase labour power on the labour market. Theoretically, capitalism can survive the elimination of capitalists: if workers acquire control of all companies while the commodities-based economy is unaffected, capitalism will remain without the capitalists. From this perspective, social democracy never truly opposed capitalism; it always defended the interests of workers as owners of commodities (namely, their

- labour power). Nevertheless, the movement initially opposed capitalists. See this volume, Chapter 13.
- 13 Kulemann, Peter (1979), *Am Beispiel des Austromarxismus. Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung in Österreich von Hainfeld bis zur Dörfuss-Diktatur*, Hamburg: Junius, p. 300.
 - 14 Women's suffrage was delayed considerably in a few cases. While most countries discussed here had implemented true general suffrage by 1919, Great Britain (1928), Belgium (1948) and Switzerland (1971) were exceptions.
 - 15 Higgins, Winton (1985), 'Ernst Wigforss: The Renewal of Social Democratic Theory and Practice', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 5, pp. 207–50 at p. 216.
 - 16 Skidelsky, Robert (1967), *Politicians and the Slump. The Labour Government of 1929–1931*, London: Macmillan; McKibbin, Ross (1975), 'The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government 1929–1931', *Past and Present*, 68, pp. 95–123; Maurer, Ilse (1973), *Reichsfinanzen und Große Koalition. Zur Geschichte des Reichskabinetts Müller (1928–1930)*, Berne: Peter Lang; Vogt, Martin (1974), 'Die Stellung der Koalitionsparteien zur Finanzpolitik 1928–1930', in Hans Mommsen *et al.* (eds), *Industrielles Systems und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf: Droste, pp. 439–62.
 - 17 Belgische Werklieden Partij (1933), *Officieele Referaten ... van het XXXXVIIe Congres*, Brussels, p. 50.
 - 18 This idea was also popular among fascists. See Krohn, Claus-Dieter (1977), 'Zur Krisen-debatte der bürgerlichen Nationalökonomie während der Weltwirtschafts-krise 1929–1933', *Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Marxschen Theorie*, 10, pp. 51–88, esp. pp. 78–82.
 - 19 On this subject, anti-communist social democrat Karl Kautsky wrote: 'In the past year, the Depression has acquired such incredible proportions that many of us believe capitalism's demise has already begun. Soviet Russia's increased publicity for its Five Year Plan coincides with the process. ... People are eager to believe what they would like to happen. This desire gives rise to a need resulting from today's dreadful poverty to perceive a rock in Russia that will be the foundation for the doctrine of the future.' Kautsky, Karl (1931), 'Das bolschewistische Kamel', *Die Gesellschaft*, II, pp. 342–56 at p. 342.
 - 20 See, for example, Landgren, Karl-Gustav (1960), *Den 'nya ekonomien' i Sverige. J.M. Keynes, E. Wigforss, B. Ohlin och utvecklingen 1927–39*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell; Garvy, George (1975), 'Keynes and the Economic Activists of Pre-Hitler Germany', *Journal of Political Economy*, 83, pp. 391–405 (on Colm, Lowe, Neisser, Woytinsky *et al.*); and Uhr, C.G. (1977), 'Economists and Policymaking 1930–1936. Sweden's Experience', *History of Political Economy*, 9, pp. 89–121 (on Lindahl, Myrdal, Ohlin *et al.*).
 - 21 For an illustrative example, see Meyer, Gerhard (1932), 'Neuere Literatur über Planwirtschaft', *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1, pp. 379–448, which reviews 48 recent publications on economic planning.
 - 22 Schneider, Michael (1975), *Das Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm des ADGB. Zur gewerkschaftlichen Politik in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik*, Bonn/Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, p. 120. The text of the ADGB resolution appears on pp. 235–36.
 - 23 Garraty, John A. (1973), 'The New Deal, National Socialism, and the Great Depression', *American Historical Review*, 78, pp. 907–44. Keynes considered his theory quite compatible with national socialism. In the preface to the German translation of his *General Theory*, he wrote: 'Nevertheless, the theory of production as an entirety, which the present book aims to provide, can be adapted to the conditions of a total state far more easily than the theory of manufacture and distribution of a certain production achieved through free competition and a large measure of *laissez faire*.' Keynes, J.M. (1936), 'Vorwort zur deutschen Ausgabe', in *idem, Allgemeine Theorie der Beschäftigung, des Zinses und des Geldes*, Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, p. ix.

- 24 A comparison between the Swedish and American policies appears in: Weir, Margaret and Skocpol, Theda (1983), 'State Structures and Social Keynesianism. Responses to the Great Depression in Sweden and the United States', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, **24**, pp. 4–29. On the rise of social Keynesianism in Norway, see Førsund, Finn B. (1978), 'Krisepolitikken og vegen til sosialismen. Det Norske Arbeiderparti 1930–1933', *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, **1**, pp. 27–55.
- 25 Abma, Ruud (1977), 'Het Plan van de Arbeid en de SDAP', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, **92**, pp. 37–68; Hansen, Erik (1981), 'Depression Decade Crisis. Social Democracy and Planisme in Belgium and the Netherlands, 1929–1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, **16**, pp. 293–322; Brélaz, Michel (1984), 'Le Plan du Travail suisse', *Bulletin de l'Association pour l'étude de l'oeuvre d'Henri de Man*, **12**, pp. 45–66; idem (1985), *Henri de Man. Une autre idée du socialisme*, Geneva: Edition des Antipodes, pp. 615–730.
- 26 Padgett, Stephen and Paterson, William E. (1991), *A History of Social Democracy in Postwar Europe*, London and New York: Longman, pp. 22–23.
- 27 Paterson, William E. and Schmitz, Kurt T. (eds) (1979), *Sozialdemokratische Parteien in Europa*, Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, pp. 22, 28, 45, 117, 140, 173; Kreissler, Felix (1974), 'Die Entwicklung der SPÖ in ihren Programmen und ihrer Politik. Vom Austromarxismus zum "Austrosozialismus" (1945–1973)', in Gerhard Botz *et al.* (eds), *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Festschrift für Karl Stadler*, Vienna: Europaverlag, pp. 209–46, 216–22; Klotzbach, Kurt (1976), 'Die Programmdiskussion in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1945–1959', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, **16**, pp. 469–83; Abt, Viktor (1988), 'Die sozialdemokratischen Parteiprogramme 1870–1982', in Karl Lang *et al.* (eds), *Solidarität, Widerspruch, Bewegung. 100 Jahre Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz*, Zurich: Limmat Verlag, pp. 79–89; Bergström, Villy (1989), 'Program och ekonomisk politik 1920–1988', in Klaus Misgeld *et al.* (eds), *Sozialdemokratis samhälle. SAP och Sverige under 100 år*, Kristianstad: Tiden, pp. 19–56, 31–38. Belgium's programme was not revised but simply 'forgotten' (oral communication from André Mommen); the British Labour Party never had a Marxist programme. The Dutch had already deleted many Marxist elements from their programme in 1937.
- 28 Meidner, Rudolf (1993), 'Why Did the Swedish Model Fail?', *Socialist Register 1993*, pp. 211–28 at p. 212.
- 29 A major shortcoming in Sassoon, Donald (1996), *One Hundred Years of Socialism. The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, is that it fails to appreciate this subculture's significance.
- 30 Gregory M. Luebbert attributes this phenomenon to the long-standing alliance with the liberals in Great Britain (as existed in France as well), which was absent in the other countries. As a result, 'an environment that put a premium on coherent working-class organization rather than interclass alliances' arose outside Great Britain. Luebbert (1991), *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy. Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 112.
- 31 Pirker, Theo (1984), 'Vom "Ende der Arbeiterbewegung"', in Rolf Ebbighausen and Friedrich Tiemann (eds), *Das Ende der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland?*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 39–51 at p. 45.
- 32 Kitschelt, Herbert (1992), 'The Socialist Discourse and Party Strategy in West European Democracies', in: Lemke and Marks, *The Crisis of Socialism in Europe*, pp. 191–227 at p. 199.
- 33 Economists disagree as to whether Keynesianism is responsible for the post-war boom. Knut Borchardt has asserted that other factors (especially the arms race of the 1930s, the Second World War with its destructive consequences, and the ensuing need for reconstruction) played a far greater role. This point does not directly concern my argument. I am far more interested in the social democratic

- interpretation of the extended expansion. See Borchardt, Knut (1982), *Wachstum, Krisen, Handlungsspielräume der Wirtschaftspolitik. Studien zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- 34 For a comparison of Austria, Norway, Finland and Sweden, see Huber, Evelyn and Stephens, John D. (1998), 'Internationalization and the Social Democratic Model: Crisis and Future Prospects', *Comparative Political Studies*, **31**, pp. 353–97. The authors believe that economic globalization has, on the one hand, reduced the possibilities of countercyclical demand regulation and, on the other hand (for example, through multinationalization of capital), contributed to the weakening of central bargaining.
 - 35 *Vrij Nederland*, 13 August 1994.
 - 36 O'Connor, James (1973), *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, New York: St Martin's Press; Théret, Bruno and Uri, Didier (1982), 'La pression fiscale: une limite à l'intervention publique?', *Critique de l'économie politique*, **21**, pp. 3–56; Krätke, Michael (1984), *Kritik der Staatsfinanzen*, Hamburg: VSA.
 - 37 For a statistical substantiation of this assertion, see the different editions of the *Year Book of Labour Statistics*, Geneva: ILO.
 - 38 For an apt analysis of the course of events in Switzerland, see Schwaar, Karl (1993), *Isolation und Integration. Arbeiterkulturbewegung und Arbeiterbewegungskultur in der Schweiz 1920–1960*, Basel and Frankfurt am Main: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, esp. pp. 193–215.
 - 39 Gidlund, Gullan (1989), 'Folkrörelsepartiet och den politiska styrelsen', in Misgeld, *Socialdemokratins samhälle*, pp. 282–310 at p. 295.
 - 40 Luykx, Theo (1975), 'De opinierichtingen in de Belgische dagbladpers', *Res Publica*, **17**, pp. 223–44 at p. 231.
 - 41 Heimann, Siegfried (1984), 'Die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands', in Richard Stöss (ed.), *Parteien-Handbuch. Die Parteien der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945–1980*, Vol. 2, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 2025–216 at p. 2198.
 - 42 The process occurred more gradually in Norway; see Høyer, Sverre (1979), 'Partiet i pressen – et omriss av arbeiderpressens utvikling i Norge', *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, **1**, pp. 11–36.
 - 43 This disintegration of mass media reflecting a political or religious perspective penetrated Christian circles as well. In Austria, about 35 per cent of the population read daily papers affiliated with a certain party in the 1960s. By the mid-1980s, this had dropped to seven per cent. See Plasser, Fritz, Ulram, Peter A. and Grausgruber, Alfred (1992), 'The Decline of "Lager Mentality" and the New Model of Electoral Competition in Austria', *West European Politics*, **15** (1), pp. 16–44 at p. 23.
 - 44 Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (1985), *Politics Against Markets. The Social Democratic Road to Power*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 118. Esping-Andersen writes that '[in] Denmark, the party organization is dying, both figuratively and literally. Today, party clubs cater primarily to old-age pensioners (bingo games and coffee), and once the old-generation members die, so will the clubs'.
 - 45 Sainsbury, Diane (1991), 'Swedish Social Democracy in Transition: The Party's Record in the 1980s and the Challenge of the 1990s', *West European Politics*, **14** (3), pp. 31–57 at p. 47.
 - 46 Haerpfer, Christian (1989), 'Die Sozialstruktur der SPÖ. Gesellschaftliche Einflußfaktoren der sozialdemokratischen Parteibindung in Österreich 1969–1988', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, **18**, pp. 373–94 at pp. 376–77. Here, 'new middle classes' are primarily: 'people employed in private industry, such as [...] officials on the one hand and other civil servants working for the public sector on the other hand' (p. 376).
 - 47 Pfabigan, Alfred (1979), 'Die Sozialistische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ)', in Paterson and Schmitz, *Sozialdemokratische Parteien*, pp. 125–38 at p. 132.
 - 48 Knut Heidar, quoted in Padgett and Paterson, *A History*, p. 95.

- 49 Damsma, Dirk and Wieling, Sjoerd (1984), 'De Coöperatie, daar had je hart voor', *Het vijfde jaarboek voor het democratisch socialisme*, Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, pp. 28–87, esp. pp. 51–75; Pestoff, Victor A. (1991), *Between Markets and Politics. Co-operatives in Sweden*, Frankfurt am Main and Boulder, CO: Campus; Prinz, Michael (1993), 'Das Ende der Konsumvereine in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. II, pp. 159–88; Desroche, Henri (1986), 'Problèmes de développement des coopératives de consommateurs', *Archives de Sciences Sociales de la Coopération*, 75, January–March, pp. 81–132; Brazda, Johann and Schediwy, Robert (1989), 'Konsumgenossenschaften im Strukturwandel', *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 15, pp. 63–84; Böök, Svend Ake and Ilmonen, Kaj (1989), 'Problems of Contemporary Cooperatives: Consumer Cooperatives in Sweden and Finland 1960–80', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 10, pp. 499–515; Nilsson, Jerker and Schediwy, Robert (1996), 'Konsum Autriche: la voie vers la fin', *Revue des études coopératives, mutualistes et associatives*, 259, pp. 44–52.
- 50 Taylor, Andrew J. (1993), 'Trade Unions and the Politics of Social Democratic Renewal', in Richard Gillespie and William E. Paterson (eds), *Rethinking Social Democracy in Western Europe*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 133–53 at pp. 148–49.
- 51 Gidlund, 'Folkrorelsepartiet och den politiska styrelsen', pp. 300–301.
- 52 For a comparative analysis of the deteriorating link between social democracy and labour support in Denmark, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom, see Moschonas, Gerassimos (1998), 'Social-démocratie et électorat ouvrier: le relâchement du lien social', *Actuel Marx*, 23, pp. 93–115.
- 53 Scharpf, Fritz W. (1987), *Sozialdemokratische Krisenpolitik in Europa. Das 'Modell Deutschland' im Vergleich*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, p. 306. This book contains a systematic comparison of social democratic policy during the recession in the Federal Republic, Great Britain, Austria and Sweden.
- 54 During recessions, Keynesian management is more effective in countries with a considerable domestic market or few ties to the world economy. On this subject, Kurzer convincingly argues that social democratic stability lasted longer in Austria and Sweden (relatively few international economic links) than in Belgium and the Netherlands (deep international economic involvement). See Kurzer, Paulette (1991), 'The Internationalisation of Business and Domestic Class Compromises: A Four Country Study', *West European Politics*, 14, pp. 1–24.
- 55 See the data for all countries studied here, except Switzerland, in Katz, Richard S. et al. (1992), 'The Membership of Political Parties in European Democracies', *European Journal of Political Research*, 22, Appendix, pp. 338–44. This conclusion regarding membership size corresponds to Bartolini's statement: 'If a trend has to be depicted, it is a declining one.' Bartolini, Stefano (1983), 'The Membership of Mass Parties: The Social Democratic Experience, 1889–1978', in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair (eds), *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*, London: Sage, pp. 177–220 at p. 185.
- 56 The changing social composition of the party branches has undoubtedly affected their operations. Renowned political scientist Maurice Duverger has observed: 'No doubt detailed research would show that predominantly working-class branches function better than those which are predominantly middle-class or peasant in character. An analysis of the Socialist parties would probably confirm these results. With them there can be observed a progressive decline of the branch system which seems to correlate to their gradually becoming middle-class. ... At the present time, in most Socialist parties, the "proletarian" branches seem to be more alive than the "middle-class" or mixed branches.' Duverger, Maurice (1964), *Political Parties. Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, 2nd rev. edn, London: Methuen, p. 27.

An interesting British debate has addressed the difference between proletarian and non-proletarian party branches. See Hindess, Barry (1971), *The Decline of Working-Class Politics*, London: MacGibbon & Kee; Baxter, R. (1972), 'The

- Working Class and Labour Politics', *Political Studies*, **20**, pp. 97–107; Forester, Tom (1976), *The Labour Party and the Working Class*, London: Heinemann; Hindess, Barry (1983), *Parliamentary Democracy and Socialist Politics*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- 57 Sombart, Werner (1895), 'Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des italienischen Proletariats: IV, Die Arbeiterkammern (Camere del lavoro) in Italien', *Archiv für Soziale Gesetzgebung und Sozialpolitik*, **8**, pp. 521–74; Rosada, Maria G. (1975), *Le Università popolari in Italia, 1900–1918*, Rome: Ed. Riuniti; Andreucci, Franco (1990), 'Italy', in Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds), *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870–1914*, vol. I, Leiden: Brill, pp. 191–208; Tomassini, Luigi (1996), 'Mutual Benefit Societies in Italy', in Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *Social Security Mutualism: The Comparative History of Mutual Benefit Societies*, Berne: Peter Lang Academic, pp. 225–71.
 - 58 Tuñón de Lara, Manuel (1972), *El movimiento obrero en la historia de España*, Madrid: Taurus, pp. 484–90; Castillo, Santiago (1998), *Hacia la mayoría de edad, 1888–1914*, Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias; Nash, Mary (1977), 'La problemática de la mujer y el movimiento obrero en España', in Albert Balcells (ed.), *Teoría y práctica del movimiento obrero en España, 1900–1936*, Valencia: F. Torres, pp. 241–79; González Quintana, Antonio and Martín Najera, Aurelio (1983), *Apuntes para la historia de las Juventudes Socialistas de España*, Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias; Guereña, Jean-Louis (1991), 'Las casas del pueblo y la educación obrera a principios del siglo XX', *Hispania*, **178**, pp. 229–61; Castillo, Santiago (ed.) (1994), *Solidaridad desde abajo: Trabajadores y socorros mutuos en la España contemporánea*, Madrid: UGT.
 - 59 Judt, Tony (1983–84), 'Class Composition and Social Structure of Socialist Parties after the First World War: France's Case', *Annali Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, **23**, pp. 279–311; Stovall, Tyler (1989), 'French Communism and Suburban Development: The Rise of the Paris Red Belt', *Journal of Contemporary History*, **24**, pp. 437–60.
 - 60 This hypothesis appears in Padgett and Paterson, *Social Democracy in Postwar Europe*, pp. 5–6.
 - 61 See, for example, Kergoat, Jacques (1983), *Le Parti Socialiste de la Commune à nos jours*, Paris: Le Sycomore, who highlights discussions between movements that perpetuate the debate between Jules Guesde and Jean Jaurès; Merkel, Wolfgang (1985), *Die Sozialistische Partei Italiens: Zwischen Oppositionssozialismus und Staatspartei*, Bochum: Studienverlag Brockmeyer, pp. 158–248; Gillespie, Richard (1989), *The Spanish Socialist Party: A History of Factionalism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
 - 62 On the influence of *planisme* in the CGT and the SFIO: Lefranc, Georges (1974), 'La diffusion des idées planistes en France', *Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto*, **31**, pp. 151–67; Schreiber, Jean-Philippe (1987), 'Le Demanisme et la France, 1926–1933', *Bulletin de l'Association pour l'étude de l'oeuvre d'Henri de Man*, **14**, pp. 61–70. On Léon Blum's economic policy see Colton, Joel (1969), 'Politics and Economics in the 1930s: The Balance-Sheet of the "Blum New Deal"', in Charles K. Warner (ed.), *From Ancien Régime to Popular Front: Essays in the History of Modern France in Honor of Shepard B. Clough*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 181–208; Margairaz, Michel (1975), 'Les socialistes face à l'économie et à la société en juin 1936', *Le Mouvement Social*, **93**, pp. 87–108. On the rejection of the Popular Front policy by the northern parties see Carrez, Maurice (1998), 'Les expériences gouvernementales et l'identité social-démocrate dans l'Europe de l'entre-deux-guerres', *Actuel Marx*, **23**, pp. 47–58 at pp. 54–55.
 - 63 Merkel, *Sozialistische Partei*, pp. 330–40; Share, Donald (1989), *Dilemmas of Social Democracy: The Spanish Socialist Workers Party in the 1980s*, New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 53–58. Some illegal Italian socialists sympathized with Henri de Man. See Rapone, Leonardo (1979), 'Il planismo nei dibattiti dell'antifascismo

- italiano', in Mario Telò (ed.), *Crisi e piano: le alternative degli anni trenta*, Bari: De Donato, pp. 269–88.
- 64 Bell, D.S. and Criddle, Byron (1988), *The French Socialist Party. The Emergence of a Party of Government*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 151. A critique of this rhetoric appears in Biewener, Carole (1987), 'Class and Socialist Politics in France', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 19, pp. 61–76.
- 65 Padgett and Paterson, *A History of Social Democracy*, pp. 40–41.
- 66 Petras, James (1984), 'The Rise and Decline of Southern European Socialism', *New Left Review*, 146, pp. 37–52 at p. 37.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Kesselman, Mark (1982), 'Prospects for Democratic Socialism in Advanced Capitalism: Class Struggle and Compromise in Sweden and France', *Politics and Society*, 11, pp. 397–438.
- 69 Ross, George and Jenson, Jane (1994), 'France: Triumph and Tragedy', in Perry Anderson and Patrick Camiller (eds), *Mapping the West European Left*, London: Verso, pp. 158–88 at p. 173.
- 70 Williams, Allan M. (1989), 'Socialist Economic Policies: Never Off the Drawing Board?', in Tom Gallagher and Allan M. Williams (eds), *Southern European Socialism: Parties, Elections and the Challenge of Government*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 188–216 at p. 192.
- 71 Williams, 'Socialist Economic Policies', p. 193; Share, *Dilemmas of Social Democracy*, pp. 71–79.
- 72 Williams, 'Socialist Economic Policies', p. 194.
- 73 Padgett and Paterson, *A History of Social Democracy*, p. 47.
- 74 Abse, Tobias (1994), 'Italy: A New Agenda', in Anderson and Camiller, *Mapping the West European Left*, pp. 189–232 at p. 212.
- 75 See, for example, Merkel, Wolfgang (1993), 'Pourquoi le socialisme n'existe-t-il pas en Europe du sud?' in Mario Telò (ed.), *De la nation à l'Europe. Paradoxes et dilemmes de la social-démocratie*, Brussels: Bruylant, pp. 227–59.
- 76 Bell and Criddle, *The French Socialist Party*, p. 15.
- 77 Ibid., p. 191.
- 78 For a detailed analysis of the process, see Kergoat, Jacques (1982), 'France: De l'agonie de la SFIO à la reconstruction du nouveau Parti Socialiste', in *Profils de la social-démocratie européenne*, Paris: La Brèche, pp. 219–86.
- 79 Hincker, François (1997), 'The French Socialists: Towards Post-Republican Values?' in Donald Sassoon (ed.), *Looking Left: European Socialism after the Cold War*, London: I.B. Taurus, pp. 109–23 at p. 110.
- 80 Van Biezen, Ingrid (1998), 'Building Party Organisations and the Relevance of Past Models: The Communist and Socialist Parties in Spain and Portugal', *West European Politics*, 21, pp. 32–62 at pp. 41–42. Van Biezen adds that the parties are not financially dependent on their members: 'parties have been quite generous to themselves in introducing large amounts of state subventions' (p. 43). Regarding specific differences in party financing, see Pelinka, Anton (1983), *Social Democratic Parties in Europe*, New York: Praeger, pp. 57–63.
- 81 Gillespie, Richard (1990), 'The Break-Up of the "Socialist Family": Party–Union Relations in Spain, 1982–89', *West European Politics*, 13 (1), pp. 47–62.
- 82 Hine, David (1989), 'The Italian Socialist Party', in Gallagher and Williams, *Southern European Socialism*, pp. 109–30 at p. 110.
- 83 Sapelli, Giulio (1997), 'The Italian Left after 1989: Continuity and Transformation', in Sassoon, *Looking Left*, pp. 44–63 at pp. 47–48.
- 84 For a symptomatic description, see Cuperus, René and Kandel, Johannes (eds) (1998), *European Social Democracy: Transformation in Progress*, Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. This collection, compiled by Western European social democracy's think tanks, makes two important points: (i) no party has an elaborate new strategy at this time; and (ii) major differences in ideological focus persist, as highlighted by the contrast between Tony Blair and Lionel Jospin.

- 85 For a detailed argumentation, see Scharpf, *Sozialdemokratische Krisenpolitik*, pp. 324–29.
- 86 Ibid., p. 331.
- 87 Kitschelt, 'The Socialist Discourse', p. 205.
- 88 Cf., for example, the critical analysis in Bihr, Alain (1991), *Du 'grand soir' à 'l'alternative'. Le mouvement ouvrier européen en crise*, Paris: Editions Ouvrières, pp. 255–81.
- 89 Peter Lösche expects the parties to follow this trend. Regarding the German party he writes: 'One might say that a "new type" of party, featuring a decentralized organization and ensuring extensive autonomy for the regional and local area chapters, runs a service company and a political decision-making centre for the Federal Republic.' Lösche, Peter (1988), 'Ende der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung?', *Die Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte*, 35, pp. 453–63 at p. 462.
- 90 A number of years ago, Perry Anderson noted – entirely in keeping with this prognosis – that European social democracy would increasingly come to resemble the American Democratic Party. See Anderson, Perry (1986), 'Social Democracy Today', *Against the Current*, 6, November–December, pp. 21–28 at p. 28. The 'Third Way', a concept introduced by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, seems to confirm this observation.
- 91 Apart from the 'green' movements, which are equally indifferent towards the bottom elements of the working class, and the communist or ex-communist parties, which simply offer variations of the social democratic theme, only tiny radical socialist parties exist.

Chapter 8

The Aftermath of '1968': Interactions of Workers', Youth and Women's Movements¹

Introduction

The year 1968 witnessed the Paris May revolt, the Prague Spring and the Vietnamese Tet Offensive. Giovanni Arrighi *et al.* have argued that 1968 was the second real *world* revolution after 1848 – a revolution that failed, to be sure, but at the same time fundamentally transformed the world. When they wrote this in the 1980s, they considered as legacies of 1968: the increased self confidence of former colonial peoples in the southern hemisphere; the wave of democratization that put an end to many dictatorships; the increased assertiveness of the working classes worldwide and the diminished power of 'dominant status-groups' (such as the older generations, men, 'majorities') over 'subordinate status-groups' (younger generations, women, 'minorities').² Of course, none of the legacies listed by Arrighi *et al.* is permanent, as attainments have to be reaffirmed and consolidated time and again, and the 1990s showed a partial regression in the overall power relations.

The characterization by Arrighi *et al.* implies that the wave of protest that swept across the world from 1966–67 until about 1976 was an aggregate of interconnected movements. Although this view seems self-evident, it is not prevalent in the sociological and historical literature. Instead, there is a tendency to write *separate* histories of social movements, without considering any possible interactions between them. In this approach, the possibility that 'the general outcomes are more than the sum of the results of an aggregate of unconnected events may be overlooked'.³ So, in the following, I am going to take the opposite point of view and consider the wave of protest as the manifestation of one great transnational cycle of contention. Within such a cycle, there is a dynamic interaction between numerous organizations, authorities and interests. Movements influence other movements and actions influence other actions.

I do not pretend to uncover all these different connections. I just want to make a start that could stimulate further research in this area. To do this, I will first point out several backgrounds to, and differences and similarities between, separate movements and then describe several factors that may have shaped the cooperation/influence between them. In this context, I will focus on two

effects of 1968 cited by Arrighi *et al.*: the altered power relations between capital and labour and between dominant and subordinate status groups. For practical reasons, I will limit myself to nine years (1968–76), four countries (France, Germany, Italy and Britain) and three movements (workers', youth and women's).

The historiography of the three movements in Britain, France, Germany and Italy is rather uneven. Although there is a reasonable amount of specialist literature on each movement in each of the countries, the quality of these writings is variable and, moreover, very different aspects are sometimes emphasized in each of these countries so that a comparison between them will be difficult without additional research. As a result, everything that follows in this context is tentative and very provisional.⁴

Before I go any further into the developments *after* 1968, let me first offer a few observations on the *annus mirabilis* itself.

'1968' and its Context

It is common knowledge that the French revolt of May–June 1968 was not the only mass demonstration of social protest in the late 1960s. In 1967 tens of thousands of German students and members of trade unions had campaigned against the *Notstandsgesetze* (Emergency Laws) during the 'Hot Summer'. A year later, many thousands of British people took part in a demonstration in support of the national liberation movement in Vietnam; and during the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969, an impressive wave of strikes swept across Italy. There is, however, no doubt that the events in France were unique. The powerful combination of student and workers' protest that left the whole country in a state of disorder and seemed to bring it to a pre-revolutionary state was without equal in the advanced capitalist countries. 'May 1968' was truly exceptional.

How could this happen? It was one thing that students took to the streets, but that also happened elsewhere, if perhaps not in equally large numbers. But what was the source of the suppressed anger of millions of workers? An anger that was so great that the trade unions lost control over developments? Perhaps the authoritarian relations in most French companies and – both cause and effect – the weakness of the French trade unions could be an explanation. It had already become clear around 1960 that the French trade unions were less deeply rooted in companies than their counterparts in the other three countries. Under influence of the 'wage drift' (the payment of wages that were *higher* than those laid down in collective agreements), there was a gradual shift from broad multi-employer agreements to individual agreements at plant and company level. This led to the organs of representation within the plant becoming increasingly important. In Britain, unpaid shop stewards acted as autonomous representatives of the workforce. Germany had works councils and *Vertrauensleute* (men and women 'of trust'). In Italy, there were the *commissione interne*, although the trade union federations (particularly the CISL and UIL) were gradually extending their organization and influence within the plants.

France, however, was different. In the early 1960s the American observer, Arthur Ross, saw no significant trend towards plant unionism. 'In fact', he wrote, 'not even works councils are functioning in the majority of establishments. The industrial relations system remains highly centralized.'⁵

The general absence of effective organs of workers' representation in the French companies made the relations within them exceptionally authoritarian. Two decades after Arthur Ross, the sociologist Duncan Gallie came to the conclusion that the French system of unilateral managerial decision-making caused an accumulation of procedural and substantive work grievances.

As a result, the firm comes to be seen primarily in conflictual terms and as such provides a model for the interpretation of the wider society. Equally, workers come to see the resolution of their immediate work grievances as dependent upon wider social conflicts. In concrete form, this is evident in a greater willingness to engage in more generalized forms of industrial conflict.⁶

According to Gallie, this causal relationship became apparent in the French strike waves of 1936, 1947 and 1968:

These strike waves were not initially planned by the trade unions, they were not part of a normal bargaining cycle and in their early stages they broke out as generalized movements of industrial protest rather than as movements with clearly formulated negotiating objectives. They correspond precisely to the type of spontaneous generalization of conflict, in a context of accumulated grievance, that would be anticipated in a situation of very low institutionalization of industrial relations at workplace level.⁷

In this context, it is not surprising that an American sociologist who carried out a survey among male workers both in his own country and in France came to the conclusion that the French felt significantly more powerless than the Americans.⁸

However, French 'exceptionalism' should not lead us to overlook the fact that social backgrounds were partly similar despite the differences with other countries. In the first place, there were common economic influences. Economic growth had been impressive since the 1950s, even if the rates of capital accumulation in each country varied (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 Changes in gross national product, 1955–75 (1950 = 100)

	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975
France	122.3	156.2	206.7	268.5	326.7
Germany	157.0	215.2	274.2	340.7	377.5
Italy	133.5	174.8	225.2	304.6	343.2
UK	116.0	131.6	153.5	173.6	192.0

Source: Calculation by the author based on Maddison, Angus (1982), *Ontwikkelingsfasen van het kapitalisme*, Utrecht and Antwerp: Het Spectrum, pp. 234–35 (Table A-8).

This increasing interdependence of the European national economies led, after the end of the 1960s, to the emergence of a 'joint reign of interdependence and instability' that was apparent in the 'increased synchronization of output movement in the advanced capitalist countries'⁹ and explains why the economic trends in the different countries fell into step. The years 1965–73 can be regarded as an international 'onset of crisis' that resulted in an internationally synchronized slump.¹⁰

The period of economic change thus corresponds almost exactly to the international wave of protest which is the subject of this discussion. The great insurgencies of the period 1968–72 took place at the end of a long period of economic growth.¹¹ The simultaneous protracted ascent of international capitalism created the principal transnational conditions for the two 'new' social movements that will be discussed here – namely, the youth and women's movements.

Striking cultural changes were a second common trend in the four countries. The extended and propitious capital accumulation of the 1950s and 1960s not only created a historically unique high standard of living among large segments of the wage-dependent population, the rapid increase in purchasing power also led to essential sociocultural and psychological changes. An entirely new type

Table 8.2 University students

Nos of students	France	England and Wales	Germany	Italy
1975				
Total	787 711	220 710	594 366	546 198
In % of 20–24 age group	19.7	6.5	14.0	14.2
Female in % of all	No data	32.8	32.1	(39.3)
1970				
Total	651 368	191 377	273 659	415 082
In % of 20–24 age group	15.4	4.9	7.3	10.1
Female in % of all	No data	28.2	29.2	46.2
1965				
Total	393 659	140 490	206 275	186 060
In % of 20–24 age group	13.6	4.8	4.9	5.4
Female in % of all	42.9	25.6	27.4	45.0
1960				
Total	202 062	89 170	160 629	120 383
In % of 20–24 age group	7.0	3.1	3.4	3.1
Female in % of all	38.2	23.9	27.4	38.0

Source: Flora, Peter *et al.* (1983), *State, Economy, and Society in Western Europe 1815–1975. A Data Handbook in Two Volumes*, Vol. I, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, pp. 582, 589, 601, 627.

of individualization emerged, and women and young adults acquired a new awareness of their role in society.¹² A second factor contributed to this – a dramatic expansion in higher education in all advanced capitalist countries after the Second World War (see Table 8.2).

This tremendous growth had an important effect. At the end of the 1960s the British historian Victor Kiernan observed that the increase of student numbers in itself must have had a significant impact: 'Youth feels able to act on its own because it has a mass basis of its own.'¹³

Parallel to these developments, women experienced many changes. First, there was a shift within the labour force from primary and secondary to tertiary sectors. On the one hand, many women workers were redeployed and moved into low-paid, non-unionized and temporary white-collar and low-status service jobs. On the other hand, 'there were also many women who began to work as "new professionals", in many cases taking work that was the public manifestation of typical female responsibilities in the sexual division of labour. Women became social workers, teachers, nurses, paramedical doctors, and government employees in the myriad of social programs spawned by the welfare state.'¹⁴ Second, the number of women in the labour force gradually increased with a concomitant rise in the participation rate of married women. Third, the number of female students grew (see Table 8.2) and, more generally, the number of highly trained women increased. As a result of all this, many women workers were forced to carry a double burden – a job and household labour – which they began to resent.

This development was conducive to the rise of women's movements for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the double burden itself stimulated demands for reform, either expressed privately (towards men) or publicly (towards the state). These mainly comprised demands concerning the workplace, maternity leave and benefits, childcare conditions and a more equal sharing of household tasks between men and women. On the other hand, the increasing number of women with a higher education and their experience of discrimination in the job market created doubts about the hegemonic ideology of liberal capitalism. Women of the professional and middle classes in particular 'resented their lack of financial and legal equality with men, but also expressed a sense of lack of fulfilment, of boredom with what even middle-class marriage – and its material comforts – had to offer'.¹⁵

A final point is the influence of world politics, which prevailed in all four countries. The Cold War was coming to its end; the anti-communism that had justified the existing power relations was undermined, resulting in more room for social criticism and the flowering of left-wing movements outside the communist parties (the international New Left). The inspiration that issued from the national and social liberation movements in different parts of the world, from Vietnam and Angola to Brazil and Columbia, added to that.

All these similarities should not encourage us to forget the variations in national developments. There are several general contextual differences that we must take into account. In our context, religion seems to be of special importance. Religious relations varied from a dominant Roman Catholic Church (in Italy and France), through a multifaith establishment (as in West

Germany), to a Protestant established church (as in Britain). The religious 'regime' in a country seems to have a direct impact on workers' and women's movements and, to a lesser extent, on youth movements. With regard to labour movements, Göran Therborn has pointed out that established Lutheran and Anglican Churches had little control over the working classes, whereas the Roman Catholic Church has been much more successful. In Therborn's view, theology *per se* is not necessarily the reason for this:

The key determinant seems to be the *church-state relation*. Established state churches, like the Lutheran and Anglican, ... have been unable to keep any operative social control of the industrial proletariat. ... Catholicism has been most successful politically in Catholic countries with a weak central state. It appears that it is in the cases where churches or denominations have been able to step into fissures of the state – either of state churches or of weak and distant secular states – that religion has been able to function as a major class-conflict displacement mechanism.¹⁶

The same argument possibly applies to women as well. We could construct a continuum, with Britain (with very little Church influence on the workers' and women's movements) on one side, closely followed by Germany, then France somewhat further on, and finally Italy on the other end of the scale (very influential).

Workers' Movements

The years 1966–74 show a significant increase in strike actions in comparison with previous years, but with diverging levels of militancy in separate countries and an uneven spread over time (see Table 8.3). Peak years were 1968 (France), 1969 (Italy), 1971 (Germany) and 1972 (UK).

This increase in strike propensity was accompanied by shifting power relationships within the trade unions. The influence of the rank and file grew and the power of trade union officialdom decreased, especially in France, Italy and Britain. In parallel, the location of strikes shifted to the enterprise/factory

Table 8.3 Days lost in labour disputes (strikes and lock-outs) per 100 000 non-agricultural labourers, 1960–75 (five-year average)

	1971–75	1966–70	1961–65
France	24 169	–*	20 894
Germany	5 594	816	2 399
Italy	152 404	148 911	111 235
UK	62 257	26 165	14 956

* Data for 1968 are not available. The average for the remaining four years is 14 343. Source: Author's calculation, based on: Flora, Peter, Kraus, Franz and Pfenning, Winfried (1987), *State, Economy, and Society in Western Europe 1815–1975. A Data Handbook in Two Volumes*, Vol. II, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, pp. 709, 715, 725, 751.

level. This trend was manifested in the increase in spontaneous and wildcat strikes and in the development of new structures of representation (such as the *delegati* and *comitati di base* in Italy and the *assemblées ouvrières* and *comités de grève* in France). The reactions of trade union officialdom were different for each country:

In the UK the TUC, far from opposing unofficial strikes, resisted a law which was designed to control them. In Germany ... the first response was to counter them, but this then changed. In France and Italy acceptance of the new role of the base has not prevented opposition to certain forms of extra-union organisations such as strike committees. The unions have also reactivated themselves, launching large official actions in order at least to co-ordinate the otherwise disordered militancy and attain new objects. They have also in each case reinforced their factory-level organisation ... By the end of the period the growing role of the rank-and-file had maintained itself but had become more channelled.¹⁷

If we look at the development of trade union density rates in each of the four countries, we see something peculiar. Whereas the rate of organization rose in Italy, Germany and Britain, it remained almost constant in France (see Table 8.4).

Intuitively, one would expect that the outburst of May–June 1968 would have constituted a breakthrough for the trade union movement. However, this appears not to be the case. The agreement of Grenelle reinforced once again the centralization in the French trade unions and it does not seem improbable that the discontent with this development explains the stagnating organization rate in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, whatever the exact explanation may be, we could say that French exceptionalism was confirmed once more. The increasing rate of organization in Germany, Italy and Britain is all the more striking, because it partly occurred in years of growing unemployment and a declining readiness to strike – a circumstance that Richard Hyman described as ‘wholly without precedence’ in the case of Britain.¹⁸

Yet, Table 8.4 also shows something else – namely that, during these years, the French trade union density rate was much lower than that in the other three countries. A marked ranking order becomes apparent if we also remember that trade union representation in France was weakest at plant level *and* that

Table 8.4 Trade union density rates, 1968–76

	France		Germany		Italy		Britain	
	Gross	Net	Gross	Net	Gross	Net	Gross	Net
1968	–	20.6	37.5	32.9	33.8	27.1	44.0	–
1972	–	21.1	38.1	33.1	42.0	35.8	49.5	–
1976	–	20.8	40.6	35.2	52.4	44.1	51.9	54.8

Note: Gross density has been calculated over the ‘raw membership’; net density excludes self-employed and retired members.

Source: Visser, Jelle (1989), *European Trade Unions in Figures*, Deventer: Kluwer, pp. 71, 96, 120, 241.

organized workers in France, like their colleagues in Italy, were divided between several trade union federations: the most powerful trade unions were those in Germany and Britain (with Britain in the lead), followed by Italy, and with France at the very bottom of the list. If we assume that, *ceteris paribus*, other social movements will be more inclined to cooperate with a trade union if that union is more powerful, then we can conjecture that the student and women's movements in France were less strongly oriented towards the trade union movement than in the other three countries.

Youth Movements

The youth movements after 1968 were initially movements of students and sometimes of secondary school pupils.¹⁹ Among these, countless initiatives and a wide range of interests emerged. The educational system was a characteristic focus and the Marxist criticism of it seemed to make sense. On the one hand, students experienced 'overcrowded classes, out-dated knowledge, bureaucratic and hierarchical social relations, class and racial segregation', while the growing Marxist influence in the humanities and the social sciences simultaneously revealed 'the whole of society as unfair and oppressive'.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, this criticism became more general and was extended from universities to the whole of society. Anti-imperialism, anti-militarism, culture and sexuality soon became subjects for discussion and contention.

The student movements' degree of radicalism varied considerably. The British student movement was the most moderate; it was clearly less violent and less radical than those in continental Europe (and the United States). 'There were no barricades, no petrol bombs, no fire hoses, no tear gas, no heavy rioting, no national university strikes or general strikes, no mass destruction of property and no shootings.'²¹ Sylvia Ellis explains this by arguing that the British authorities dealt with the students in a moderate way, and that this had a stabilizing effect. This contrasted dramatically with the heavy-handed approach in Italy, France and Germany where police violence 'acted as a trigger for further student support as more moderate students reacted not to the initial reason for student action but to repression by authorities'.²² Ellis's argument is supported by Backman and Finlay, who made a survey of protest events in 18 countries during the period from September 1964 to September 1969. One of the results related to the 'immediate outcomes' and gave the picture depicted in Table 8.5.

There are no comparable data for Italy, as Italy was not included in the sample. As the table shows, whereas police involvement was approximately the same in these three countries, their behaviour was evidently less aggressive in Britain than in France and in Germany. French police action was more violent as compared with that in Germany.²³

The relation of the students to the established left wing parties was complex. In general, they kept distant from the communist and social democratic organizations, except when they thought they could bring about radical change within these organizations. In 1968 the membership of the Italian communist

Table 8.5 Immediate outcomes of police intervention in student protest events

Country	No. of protest events	Police involved (%)	Students arrested (%)	Students injured (%)	Students killed (%)
France	116	38.8	23.3	21.7	0.9
Germany	125	34.4	23.1	9.6	0.8
Britain	48	33.3	14.6	2.1	0

Source: Backman, Earl L. and Finlay, David J. (1973–74), 'Student Protest. A Cross-National Study', *Youth and Society*, 5, pp. 3–45.

youth organization Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana (FGCI) dropped from 125 438 to 68 648 within one year. Only in 1975 did it return to the level of 1968.²⁴

In all four countries, far-left groups developed to the left of the established left-wing parties. These groups regarded themselves as nuclei of future revolutionary workers' parties. The Maoist influence predominated in Italy and Germany, in Britain Trotskyism prevailed, whereas in France both movements had a clear impact. Some groups existed already before the youth protest and benefited from it, while others were newly formed. In general, the organizations were an expression of the fact that young people, and especially students, had realized that they could not build enough power to revolutionize society on their own. Moreover, the events in France in May–June 1968 and the Italian 'Hot Autumn' had made it seem likely that the working class was their natural ally in the struggle against capitalism and that the official communist parties were no longer revolutionary.

In the early 1970s, the far left was at its height. In Italy it was by far the most powerful, with three daily newspapers, dozens of radio stations and half a dozen members of parliament. France was second best, whereas the organizations in Germany and Britain were, in comparison, somewhat weaker, although they had considerable support, especially in university cities.²⁵ All these organizations tried to connect to the working class, by organizing strikes, selling papers at the main entrance to the company premises, or even by turning student members into 'proletarians' by sending them to the factory. The various groups had high political hopes. Many thought that the overthrow of capitalism would take place in a matter of a few years. When these hopes did not materialize, confusion ensued. This began in Italy where the elections of 1976 led to splits. Yet not long afterwards, organizations in other countries also slid into crisis, losing members, reducing the frequency of their publications or deciding to discontinue.

Women's Movements

In all four countries, the revival of workers' and student protest took shape in the mid-1960s. The women's movement flowered only *after* 1968.²⁶ The 'second feminist wave' developed in the context of the youth movement, especially the

student movement, as a result of the negation by left-wing groups outside parliament.²⁷ There had been sporadic feminist initiatives already before 1968, such as the Italian group Demau ('Demistificazione autoritarismo', later called 'Demistificazione autoritarismo patriarcale'), which had been set up in 1966.²⁸ Nevertheless, this kind of feminist initiative remained weak at first. Only after the rebellions of 1968–69, a broader women's movement started. Female militants found that the protest movement, which was dominated by men, left a considerable part of the old society intact. In fact, Frigga Haug's observations with regard to female students in Berlin around 1970 were true for all the four countries discussed here:

The breathless extent of student protest, reaching from US aggression in Asia to events in private bedrooms, had inspired a large proportion of women, who now constituted 34 per cent of the student body. They met again in political centres to make coffee, to type leaflets, to duplicate and distribute, for those engaged in all-night discussions. Their contributions to debate, when they ventured to make any, were dispensed with the standard rhetoric. Moreover they recognized that sexual liberation, insofar as it was practised, was a male privilege and could only be damaging for women who tried it. . . . By accusing male comrades, friends, brothers, fathers, in short the entire sex, and exposing them as the practical beneficiaries and agents of day-to-day oppression, women gave a new shape and direction to political struggle. They were to unite independently and resist the customary supremacy of men, in order to strike at the foundations of the two-headed domination of a capitalist-patriarchal system.²⁹

The new women's movement started as a multi-item movement that was everywhere rooted principally in the university environment. An expansion to broader social circles became possible when concrete issues were brought to the fore. In this respect, the struggle for legalized abortion was particularly crucial to the broadening of women's protest in Italy, France and Germany.³⁰ The beginning of this broadening can be dated back to 5–6 April 1971, when *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Le Monde* published the historic 'Manifesto of the 343', in which 343 women declared that they had undergone an abortion. This example was soon followed in Germany. In Italy, the abortion movement took off slightly later, around 1973, despite earlier efforts of the Movimento de Liberazione della Donna (MLD). In Britain, abortion was legalized to a limited extent in 1967 (on specific grounds but not on demand), and only became an issue in 1975 when a right-wing MP presented a Private Member's Bill with the intention of annulling the 1967 law.³¹

Like the youth movements, the women's movements had complex relations with the established left-wing parties. If these parties had separate organizations for women which developed along feminist lines, an alliance followed as a matter of course and interfusion took place.³² At the same time, however, the new women's movement, which in general considered itself to be 'autonomous', did not want to be tied to any political party. There was a similar complex relation to organizations of the far left. These partly supported the women's movements, but there were also groups that were extremely hostile on the grounds that feminism would lead away from the class struggle.

Interactions

In general, three forms of interaction between the three movements can be distinguished:

- 1 coalitions – that is, cooperation between different movements (in particular the social movement organizations), or the opposite (that is, antagonism between movements);
- 2 internal influence – that is, the influence of a movement within another movement (for example, the women's movement within the workers' movement);
- 3 external influence – that is, spillover effects, in which one movement more or less imitated the demands or forms of action or organization of another movement.

What interactions took place between workers', women's and youth organizations? We should not just regard this question in national terms. There were, as we noted, all kinds of cross-border influences. 'May 1968' and the Italian 'Hot Autumn' were transnational sources of inspiration and, more generally, movements (especially those of women and young people) served as an example across the national borders. Delegations of radical students paid visits to fraternal organizations in other countries, and feminists from different countries read each other's literary products and imitated each other's forms of action.³³ Not only the contacts within Europe but also the relations with the United States were very important. The student protest in Berkeley, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and many other American influences, including sit-in and obstruction tactics, spilled over into Europe.³⁴

Let us, nevertheless, examine the national developments more closely. In all four countries, a broad youth movement emerged, consisting of secondary school pupils, students and young working-class people. The students took the lead and inspired other young people. The interaction between the student and workers' movements in particular was strategically important in the protests of the years 1968–76. In all countries, the students were eager to cooperate with the workers, whether or not via the existing organizations (trade unions and political parties). Yet this cooperation was not realized everywhere without difficulty and did not always take the same form. An important background factor in this matter was that the large majority of students, despite the enormous growth of higher education, had a middle- or upper-class background, which created a considerable 'communicative distance' to the working classes.³⁵

In Italy, these relations developed in a relatively smooth way. Sidney Tarrow perused the *Corriere della Sera* for the period from 1 January 1966 to 31 December 1973 and found no less than 72 cases in which students took part in labour disputes: 'Student participation was most often found in the metalworking sector, but students also participated in strikes against Michelin in Trento, Pirelli in Milan, Marzotto in Pisa and Valdagno, and Montedison in Porto Marghera.'³⁶ The situation in Germany was very different. In that

country, a short-lived coalition of trade unions (especially the huge metalworkers union IG-Metall) and socialist students from the SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) had tried to resist the Emergency Laws in 1967–68, but cooperation had broken down soon afterwards.³⁷

How can we explain these national differences? I would like to offer a few suggestions. The attitude of the trade union leadership was crucial to the relations. Several motives could account for the trade union leaders' willingness to cooperate. First, there were cases in which the structural weakness of the trade unions made it worthwhile for their leaders to cooperate with the students. Apparently, this was the case in Italy. Tarrow concluded:

... in Italy it was not as unnatural as it would have been in the United States or Britain for students to participate in workers' protests. Where collective bargaining is weak and the unions are present in few factories, as was the case in Italy, industrial conflict normally leaves the plant precincts to spread into the streets and piazzas, where students can easily join picket lines and public marches. If the Italian students found in the working class the historical bearer of the revolutionary grail, the workers found in the radical students a combative reserve army to help publicize their grievances and man the picket lines.³⁸

Moreover, the weakness of the trade unions in the workplace made it easy for the students to establish *direct* contact with the workers:

Loose associations of students came to the factory entrances and addressed the ordinary worker directly or, like the *Lega studenti e operai* in Turin, sought regular contact with the workers in a bar in the vicinity of the Fiat-Mirafiori factory. These aspects ... point to the markedly direct nature of the relations.³⁹

Unlike the French unions in 1968, the Italian unions often welcomed the students and used their support to publicize the workers' demands:

For although the students urged the workers to put forward extreme demands that the unions did not advocate, student support could be useful. In addition to bolstering the numbers of those engaged in picketing and public marches, they fostered the impression of broad social support for the working class, making it more difficult for the police to use force against strikers. If the workers' movement represented a new lease on life for the students, student support broadened the base of the unions' political base.⁴⁰

In only a few cases (such as in Germany during the struggle against the *Notstandsgezetze*), did trade union leaders value cooperation with the students even though the trade unions were structurally less weak.

In the cases in which the trade union leadership did not want cooperation with the students, the decisive motives could also vary, but ultimately came down to political unwillingness, in the cases of both strong and of weak trade unions. We saw different examples of this in the cases of, for instance, both the CGT and the DGB (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund). Alessandro Pizzorno explained the CGT's aversion as being attributable to its perceived position in the political bargaining process. The CGT considered itself as the mouthpiece

of all oppositional movements and as the monopolist of mass mobilization. 'It felt threatened by the student movement in this capacity. If it intervened in the situation it could help to limit political disorder (if not restore order) while at the same time receiving in exchange gains of a traditional contractual nature.'⁴¹ In the case of the DGB, Hans Hemmer pointed to the biographical backgrounds of the trade union leaders, distinguishing between two generations that were in control of the DGB at the end of the 1960s. First, there were:

... the men born not long after the turn of the century with solid training mainly as craftsmen in the metal- and woodwork sectors, who were involved in trade unions and later also in political parties Often, they had held positions in the trade unions on a local and regional level already before 1933; between 1933 and 1945, the course of their lives varies greatly (concentration camps and detention, emigration, 'hibernation').⁴²

This disillusioned generation had witnessed the downfall of the Weimar Republic personally and consciously:

In their experience, the developments after 1945 were ... a success story. Never before – and certainly with regard to the important phases in their own lives – had the trade unions achieved such successes – above all in the set wages of the collective agreements and in social policies.⁴³

According to this generation, these achievements were threatened by the radical student protests. The second generation of DGB leaders was born between 1910 and 1925, also came from a blue-collar, and sometimes from a white-collar, background and did not yet occupy positions in the trade unions during the Weimar Republic. They usually became active in the trade union after the Second World War. They moved upwards in the period after the war when the trade unions prospered. This, and the fact that many of them went along with national socialism which the students reacted against, made this generation suspicious of the student movement.⁴⁴

If the trade union leaders refused to cooperate with the student movement, the students could only try to establish contact at grassroots level. Whether this was successful or not depended, of course, partly on the control of the trade union leadership over its supporters. However, it also depended on the extent to which the students could communicate with the workers. As I mentioned earlier, this often proved to be very difficult, because of the students' non-proletarian background. Hemmer finds that the German students 'mostly came from a middle-class or upper middle-class background, which did not enhance their ability to communicate with the "proletariat" and put them at an extra disadvantage as compared to their "rivals" for the workers' favour, the trade-union officials'.⁴⁵ A trade union member wrote on this subject:

Often, I took part in discussions with colleagues from the companies, who took the view that it would, no doubt, be easy for students to take part in demonstrations, as they had no family to support and were paid money from the purse of the tax payer. Their motto – they live at our cost, they should study for that and not participate in

demonstrations – made it difficult to gain ground against these prejudices with arguments.⁴⁶

But even if cooperation between students and workers remained difficult, occasionally the student movement would stir up young working-class people. For instance, the years 1969–71 saw the founding of the German *Lehrlingsbewegung* (the apprentice movement) which has been called the ‘most remarkable spillover of the student movement in the trade unions’.⁴⁷ The apprentice movement was based on the fact that hundreds of thousands of young workers in Germany were partly trained in industry. The injustices that they experienced in this form of training triggered the formation of groups or centres for youths first in large cities (Munich, Essen, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and so on) and soon afterwards in smaller towns. These centres were independent, although they were often financially supported by the DGB. When the youth movement appeared to gather its own momentum and could no longer be controlled by local and higher trade union officials it was ‘strangled’ by orders from above.⁴⁸

Traditionally, the trade unions of the four countries had always had female members, but they were usually a rather small minority and, above all, had hardly any power at a central level. I do not have exact information on the numerical participation of women that can be compared internationally, and it seems extremely difficult to generate such data. However, complaints about the lack of influence of women in the trade unions were fairly widespread during the late 1960s and the early 1970s and these seem to be a strong indication.

Although, as I mentioned, the women’s movement originated primarily in university circles, in some cases feminism soon sprang up among women dependent on wage income. This change was probably linked to the changing and improving bargaining position of women in the 1960s. As a result of the rapid accumulation of capital, the demand for labour power was so great that, on the one hand, an increasing number of workers was imported from the European periphery or from Africa, and, on the other hand, women who until then had done subsistence labour in the household were persuaded to take a paid job. Consequently, the participation of women in the labour force increased everywhere from the 1960s onwards (see Table 8.6).

The position of these newcomers in the job market was relatively strong and they therefore could make demands. To some extent, they were supported in

Table 8.6 The female labour force as a percentage of the total labour force

	1960	1968	1974	1987
France	33.3	35.1	37.0	43.0
Germany	37.3	36.1	37.5	39.5
Italy	30.7	28.5	29.7	36.1
Britain	32.7	34.7	37.4	41.6

Source: *OECD Historical Statistics, 1960–1997*, Paris: OECD, 1999.

this by the authorities. In 1957, when the European Common Market was set up, it was laid down that the six member states must have implemented equal pay by 31 December 1961. In 1970, Britain followed suit by passing the Equal Pay Bill which came into force in 1975.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the results of these regulations were not very impressive. In 1969 the women's pay compared with that of men was 69.3 per cent for Germany, 73.7 per cent for Italy and 75.4 per cent for France. In Britain (which had not yet joined the European Community), the percentage was 59.5 at that time. If one realizes that the percentages were 85 per cent for France in 1962 and 50 per cent for Britain, it becomes clear that regulation as such was not a solution.⁵⁰ Many women were aware of this and decided to take concrete action. Britain led the way. A move that attracted much attention was the three-week strike by female sewing machinists at the Ford motor works in Dagenham, near London, in June 1968, aimed at reducing the income differential between men and women. Other strikes with similar aims took place in approximately the same period.⁵¹

There were, therefore, 'objective' influences that worked towards more rights for women workers. Parallel to that, the percentage of women in the trade unions increased in each of the four countries, sometimes partly because of major campaigns (as in Germany), but often without such a stimulus. At the same time, the women's representation at a higher level in the organizations was considerably below par in all these countries. Bianca Beccalli's observation for Italy – 'Representation [of women] in union hierarchies goes down as one goes up the bureaucratic ladder' – was true for all countries.⁵² The progress of women's trade union representation over the four countries can briefly be described as follows:

- The German trade unions started a major drive to enrol women in 1972, the Year of Women Employees. This drive was the result of years of endeavour by the DGB's Women's Division.⁵³ 'In 1972 and in several years thereafter, women represented more than half of all new members enrolled. In 1975 women made up 75 per cent of new members.'⁵⁴ This increase in women's participation was, however, not accompanied by a proportional increase in women's influence. At the seventh union congress of the DGB (Berlin, 1966), 4.6 per cent of the delegates were women, whereas women comprised 15.7 per cent of the membership; at the eleventh union congress (Hamburg, 1978), these percentages had risen to 7.3 and 18.8 per cent respectively.⁵⁵ In the organization of the DGB itself, women remained a minority among the full-time trade-union officials. Both in 1974 and in 1979, women made up 3.7 per cent of the full-time members of state-level executive committees who did the 'hard bargaining' with the employers.⁵⁶
- In Britain, no major drives similar to that of the DGB in 1972 were organized. Nevertheless, there was a steady increase in the percentage of women members of the trade union, from 22.0 per cent (2 256 000 members in 1966) to 28.7 per cent in 1976 (3 561 000 members).⁵⁷ I do not have general information on the influence of women within the TUC, but there are strong indications that the representation of women on a higher

level remained below par. A report of one of the larger unions, NALGO (National Association of Local Government Officers) noted in 1975 that women comprised 40 per cent of its members but only 20 per cent of the executive committees and 15 per cent of the local officials.⁵⁸

- In France, many women workers became trade union members after 1968. According to a CGT report from 1976, 55.8 per cent of the women who were members of the CGT and 68.8 per cent of those who were members of the CFDT had joined in 1969 and after.⁵⁹ In 1976 one-quarter of the CGT members were women; for the CFDT, this was 40 per cent. Women were not represented on a par in higher trade union bodies. In 1981 the ratios in the executives (*Bureaux*) were as follows: 3 out of 16 members of the CGT were women; 1 out of 10 in the CFDT; 2 out of 23 in the CFTC; 1 in 12 in the CGT-FO; and none of 18 in the CGC.⁶⁰
- In Italy, women's membership in the unions was 'roughly proportional' to their participation in the workforce. I do not have data on all confederations, but in 1977 women made up 30.2 per cent of the workforce and 29.3 per cent of CGIL membership. According to a data bank of the Federazione Lavoratori Metalmeccanici (FLM) for 1980, 56 per cent of the women and 62 per cent of the men were unionized. However, the number of women delegates at union conferences as a percentage of the female workforce in the same year was 1.9 per cent, whereas the figure for men was 3.2. 'And if one excludes the unions' technical and secretarial personnel (overwhelmingly female), women almost disappear: they are 6 per cent of full-time officials in the CGIL and 1 per cent of the national leadership of all unions.'⁶¹

Significantly, the women's movements soon became active on two levels. On the one hand, the conventional fight for equal economic rights (equal pay, and so on), could easily be incorporated in traditional trade union policies. However, on the other hand, a second level emerged that was much more problematic for the trade unions:

As women entered the world of the salariat, they encountered inequalities *beyond* those of lower wages, unequal access to training, and problems of maternity. In other words, the status of women could not be derived *only* from the desire of capital to have a pool of cheaper, less organized, and more exploitable labour. The experience of women in the modern capitalist system (as industrial workers but especially as service sector, professional, and intellectual workers) raised questions of domination and subordination between men and women in work, in the family, in the couple, and in sexuality⁶²

Not all trade unions were that inclined to become active on both levels. The CGT, for instance, was unwilling to take up so-called 'private' family matters until late in the 1970s.⁶³ The CFDT, on the other hand, took part in the formation of the Mouvement pour la Libération de l'Avortement et de la Contraception (1973–74). It seems that, in the Italian trade unions, 'broad' feminism gained a fair degree of influence, whereas in Britain and in Germany it probably gained somewhat less.

Final Remarks

The idea that strikes occur in waves is long-standing; it was already expressed by Alvin Hansen in the 1920s.⁶⁴ The notion of *international* strike waves is more recent but has been accepted fairly widely.⁶⁵ The development of workers' struggles in our four countries in the years 1968–76 seems to confirm this again. We should, however, take this one step further and seriously consider the idea of a broader international wave of protest. The women's, youth and workers' movements made up a diverse whole. Students initiated 'May '68', and the French workers subsequently gave a historically unique signal, which not only inspired workers in other countries, but also other young people and women. The 'second feminist wave' originated in the youth movements, became independent and influenced in its turn both the youth movements and the trade unions.

It is precisely these connections that explain why all these movements emerged at approximately the same time, achieved their peak shortly after each other and became less active from 1974–75 onwards. Militants in all movements were urged on by high hopes. They drew their energy and their staying power from the hope that they would very soon witness a far-reaching social transformation. However, this hope turned out to be unfounded. Chris Harman's description of the far left also applied to large numbers of activists of other movements:

By the mid-1970s much of the membership of the revolutionary organizations had been involved in non-stop activity for seven, eight or even ten years. They had come to politics on the barricades in 1967–69 and had hardly stopped moving since. Day after day, week after week, they had sold papers, produced bulletins, stood outside factories, argued over political issues. This was fine when the movement was going from strength to strength. When the forward march was checked, much of the activity seemed to lose its point.⁶⁶

Yet another insight can be gathered from the above. We have noted how communist and labour parties have in turn played an important (sometimes positive and sometimes negative) role in mobilization and learning processes and something of the kind can be said of organizations on the far left. Those women and men who were both active in a political organization and in a movement had to achieve the difficult feat of a 'double militancy'.⁶⁷ Currently influential theories of social movements such as the so-called 'resource-mobilization theory' of Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and others tend to neglect this political aspect and are therefore in need of conceptual (especially political) extension.⁶⁸

Appendix: Two Clarifications

The Concept of 'Social Movement'

The interpretations of the concept of 'social movement' vary. On further consideration, the concept appears to be by no means unequivocal. In fact, no

one knows *exactly* what a social movement is.⁶⁹ The textbooks cannot come to an agreement and time and again publications appear that aim to define what it is understood to mean.⁷⁰ Of course, there are social phenomena that *everyone* intuitively regards as a social movement, such as, for instance, the early workers' movement in the nineteenth century. There are, however, also all kinds of marginal cases on which opinions differ. Is, for instance, Greenpeace a social movement? And how about the farmers' protest against the European Union?

Ottheim Rammstedt has suggested that the relative vagueness of the term 'social movement' is inevitable, because, in the course of time, the nature of social movements as such has repeatedly changed; as a result, the theoreticians had to choose whether to repeatedly construct new concepts of social movements or use the term in a flexible way.⁷¹ Consequently, translating the intuitive use of the term into a scientific conceptualization is the best we can do. Listed below are a few familiar characteristics of social movements:⁷²

- The power base of social movements is not firmly institutionalized. The supporters have to be repeatedly mobilized and convinced of the importance of their commitment. Support is sought continually; the movement is compelled to keep 'moving'.
- Social movements are not short-lived. They last for some time and make themselves heard for at least a couple of months and sometimes for many years.
- There is a fairly strongly developed sense of 'us', based on the opposition between supporters and opponents.
- People can participate in social movements in many different ways; they can be members of official organizations that are involved in the movement, they may join activities and demonstrations or they may give support in a quite different way.
- A social movement is multiform; it consists of different organizations that sometimes compete and use a variety of levers.
- A social movement aims to change an important aspect of society or prevent such a change.
- Social movements are often not local or regional but national or even international phenomena; they seek to influence the authorities (the government, a multinational and so on).

These basic observations do not lead to a definition that is valid forever and always applies, but they do enable us to take a position in several academic disputes. The view of those who equate an organized group with a movement – such as in the argument that Greenpeace = the environmental movement, for example – is untenable.⁷³ We can also discount the opinion of those who regard every pursuit of organizational power (including the internal *coup d'état*, by which persons in the first or the second rank of an organization remove the leader of leaders) as a social movement.⁷⁴ And, finally, we can keep our distance from those who assign it to the so-called 'episodes of collective behaviour', comparable to mass hysteria, group mania or hostile outbursts.⁷⁵

The dynamic, multiform and shifting nature of a social movement; the fact that no one person has complete control, while, at the same time, all kinds of organized centres are active within it, are essential characteristics:

Social movements are usually not unorganized, but organization is not crucial for a movement. Organization creates, among other things, continuity, co-ordination and also impetus, but without the spontaneous and erratic actions of those active outside the organization it would not amount to much, and certainly not a social movement. The special thing about a social movement is precisely the interaction between the movement's organizations and the fluid parts of the movement.⁷⁶

Parties, associations and organizations and so on, that are part of a social movement therefore have an ambivalent status. They are both formal organizations and movement organizations. When movement organizations become so official that they attach more importance to lobbying, information campaigns, contacts with the media and consultation with the opponent than to protest, then they become lobby or pressure groups. They no longer have the characteristics of a movement.

These considerations imply that trade unions and other lobbies as such must not be mistaken for social movements. They can be *part* of such movements, but that depends on the extent to which they involve themselves in protests with a much broader basis, in which all kinds of spontaneous and uncoordinated direct action takes place. If one wishes to write the history of a social movement, a description of organizational developments will certainly not be sufficient.

The Concept of a 'New Social Movement'

Since the 1970s, an extensive literature has appeared in the field of social studies in which it is argued that the women's movement, the environmental movement, the peace movement, the Third World movement and so on are very different from the old social movements, which, in this view, mainly include the workers' movements. Various authors such as Jean Cohen, Klaus Eder, Jürgen Habermas, Alberto Melucci and Claus Offe have argued that the so-called new social movements represent a historically unprecedented form of social protest and that they are typical products of highly developed industrial or post-industrial societies. The rise of welfare states in Europe and North America after the Second World War would, on the one hand, have created great prosperity and economic security, but, on the other hand, anonymity and bureaucracy. The new social movements, which focus less on material demands and more on autonomy, personal growth and small-scale organization come into being in a reaction to these conditions.⁷⁷

All this must sound familiar. It seems fairly convincing if we contrast the second feminist wave with the established trade unions of the 1960s. Yet, if we take a broader perspective on the issue, over a longer period of time and in a wider context, the theory of the new social movements is hardly tenable. On further consideration, it becomes apparent that social movements that have

many features in common with the present-day, so-called 'new' social movements have existed for at least a century and a half. In the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, there were movements in England and France that highly valued personal growth and individual autonomy, developed alternative lifestyles and pursued universal aims.⁷⁸ The tactics employed by the very old and the new social movements appear to be largely identical but with two exceptions: the new movements emphasize the occupation of buildings and public spaces and focus more strongly on a dramatic approach by which to attract the attention of others (for instance the mass media).⁷⁹ It is quite possible that much of what we find characteristic of the so-called new social movements does not arise from the highly developed capitalist context in which these movements appear, but that they are characteristic of every new big wave of social protest that occurs in history – a great diversity of motives, expressions and 'self-discoveries' that narrows down and becomes a more focused, but culturally less abundant, form of protest.⁸⁰

Notes

- 1 This chapter is a revised version of a keynote address, presented at the workshop 'Les syndicalismes et les relations sociales dans les pays industrialisés', Paris University I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), 4 November 2000. I would like to thank Marian van der Klein, Antoine Prost, Jenneke Quast and Chris Wrigley for their comments on the first draft.
- 2 Arrighi, Giovanni, Hopkins, Terence K. and Wallerstein, Immanuel (1989), *Antisystemic Movements*, London and New York: Verso, ch. 5.
- 3 Tarrow, Sidney (1989), *Democracy and Disorder. Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965–1975*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 142.
- 4 Although the trade unions are usually characterized as 'old social movements' and the student and women's movements as 'new social movements', we must realize that the latter are 'old' social movements in the strict sense of the word as the history of some social movement organizations went back several decades. In this context, we may think of the Unione delle Donne (UDI, set up in 1946), the Union Nationale des Etudiants Français (UNEF, set up in 1907/1946), the Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund (SDS, set up in 1946) among others. However, some organizations were, of course, revitalized dramatically in the second half of the 1960s, leading in some cases to their dissolution (the SDS, for instance, was disbanded in 1970). See also Kontos, Silvia (1986), 'Modernisierung der Subsumtionspolitik? Die Frauenbewegung in den Theorien neuer sozialer Bewegungen', *Feministische Studien*, 5 (2), pp. 34–49 and the 'Appendix' at the end of this chapter.
- 5 Ross, Arthur M. (1962–63), 'Prosperity and Labor Relations in Western Europe: Italy and France', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 16, pp. 63–85 at p. 76. This article contains a report of a part of Ross's research into the position of the trade unions in the four countries. See also his articles (1962), 'Prosperity and Labor Relations in Europe. The Case of West Germany', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 76 (3), pp. 331–59; (1962–63), 'Prosperity and British Industrial Relations', *Industrial Relations*, 2, pp. 63–94.
- 6 Gallie, Duncan (1983), *Social Inequality and Class Radicalism in France and Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 157–58.
- 7 Ibid., p. 157.

- 8 Seeman, Melvin (1972), 'The Signals of '68. Alienation in Pre-Crisis France', *American Sociological Review*, **37**, pp. 385–402.
- 9 MacEwan, Arthur (1984), 'Interdependence and Instability. Do the Levels of Output in the Advanced Capitalist Countries Increasingly Move Up and Down Together?', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, **16** (3), pp. 57–79 at p. 76.
- 10 Brenner, Robert (1998), 'The Economics of Global Turbulence', *New Left Review*, **229**, May–June, pp. 93–137; Mandel, Ernest (1978), *The Second Slump*, trans. Jon Rothschild, London: New Left Books.
- 11 Not only in the advanced capitalist countries of the North Atlantic, but also in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere. See, for example, Bathily, Abdoulaye (1992), *Mai 68 à Dakar ou la révolte universitaire et la démocratie*, Paris: Ed. Chaka; or Brennan, James P. (1994), *The Labor Wars in Córdoba, 1955–1976. Ideology, Work, and Labor Politics in an Argentine Industrial City*, Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, ch. 5 ('The Cordobazo').
- 12 See the very detailed study on this subject: Marwick, Arthur (1998), *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958–c.1974*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 13 Kiernan, V.G. (1969), 'Notes on the Intelligentsia', *Socialist Register 1969*, pp. 55–84 at p. 70.
- 14 Jenson, Jane (1982), 'The Modern Women's Movement in Italy, France, and Great Britain: Differences in Life Cycles', *Comparative Social Research*, **5**, pp. 341–75 at p. 344.
- 15 German, Lindsey (1988), 'Rise and Fall of the Women's Movement', *International Socialism*, Second Series, **37**, Winter, pp. 3–47 at p. 4.
- 16 Therborn, Göran (1983), 'Why Some Classes Are More Successful than Others', *New Left Review*, **138**, March–April, pp. 37–55 at pp. 45–46.
- 17 Dubois, Pierre (1978), 'New Forms of Industrial Conflict', in Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno (eds), *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe since 1968*, Vol. 2: *Comparative Analyses*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 1–34 at p. 8.
- 18 Hyman, Richard (1980), 'British Trade Unionism. Post-war Trends and Future Prospects', *International Socialism*, Second Series, **8**, Spring, pp. 64–79 at p. 71.
- 19 For background information see Altbach, Philip (1970), 'The International Student Movement', *Journal of Contemporary History*, **5**, pp. 156–74; Statera, Gianni (1975), *Death of a Utopia. The Development and Decline of Student Movements in Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- 20 Cohen, Yolande (1983), 'Student Protest in the Welfare State: France and West Germany in the 1960s', *Comparative Social Research*, **6**, pp. 299–312 at p. 303.
- 21 Ellis, Sylvia (1998), '"A Demonstration of British Good Sense?" British Student Protest during the Vietnam War', in Gerard J. Degroot (ed.), *Student Protest. The Sixties and After*, London and New York: Longman, pp. 54–69 at p. 54.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 67–68.
- 23 Backman, Earl L. and Finlay, David J. (1973–74), 'Student Protest. A Cross-National Study', *Youth and Society*, **5**, pp. 3–45.
- 24 Kallscheuer, Otto, Rafalski, Traute and Wenzel, Gisela (1978), 'Die KPI heute. Aspekte der Identitätskrise der kommunistischen Massenpartei', *Prokla*, **32**, pp. 73–110, Table 1 at p. 106.
- 25 I think of organizations like the following: PdUP-Manifesto, Avanguardia Operaia and Lotta Continua in Italy; the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste and Révolution/OCT in France; Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschlands, Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, Kommunistischer Bund in Germany; and the International Socialists, the International Marxist Group and the Workers' Revolutionary Party in Britain.
- 26 I do not know any comprehensive comparative study of women's movements although there are excellent studies on individual countries. On France see García Guadilla, Naty (1981), *Libération des femmes. le M.L.F.*, Paris: PUF; on Germany

- see Wiggershaus, Renate (1979), *Geschichte der Frauen und der Frauenbewegung*, Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, esp. pp. 111–54; on Italy see Chiavola Birnbaum, Lucia (1986), *Liberazione della donna. Feminism in Italy*, Middletown, CO: Wesleyan University Press; and Ergas, Yasmine (1986), *Nelle maglie della politica. Femminismo, istituzioni e politiche sociali nell'Italia degli anni '70*, Milan: Franco Angeli – the former descriptive, the latter analytical; on Britain see Bouchier, David (1983), *The Feminist Challenge. The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the United States*, London: Macmillan.
- 27 See, for instance, Gramaglia, Mariella (1987), 'Affinità e conflitto con la nuova sinistra', *Memoria: rivista di storia delle donne*, 19–20, pp. 19–37.
 - 28 Ergas, Yasmine (1987), 'Tra sesso e genere', *Memoria: rivista di storia delle donne*, 19–20, pp. 11–18.
 - 29 Haug, Frigga (1986), 'The Women's Movement in West Germany', *New Left Review*, 155, January–February, pp. 50–74 at p. 53.
 - 30 See also Kristina Schulz's interesting comparative essay on this subject: (1998), 'Macht und Mythos von "1968". Zur Bedeutung der 68er Protestbewegungen für die Formierung der neuen Frauenbewegungen in Frankreich und Deutschland', in Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey (ed.), *1968 – Vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 256–72.
 - 31 De Pisan, Annie and Tristan, Anne (1977), *Histoires du M.L.F.* Préface de Simone de Beauvoir, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, ch. III; Lumley, Robert (1990), *States of Emergency. Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978*, London and New York: Verso, pp. 321–25; Zwerenz, Ingrid (1980), *Die Geschichte des § 218*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag; Batiot, A. (1982), 'The Political Construction of Sexuality. The Contraception and Abortion Issues in France, 1965–1975', in Ph.G. Cerny (ed.), *Social Movements and Protest in France*, London: Frances Pinter, pp. 125–46; Mossuz-Lavau, Janine (1991), *Les lois de l'amour. Les politiques de la sexualité en France de 1950 à nos jours*, Paris: Payot, pp. 73–133; German, 'Rise and Fall of the Women's Movement', pp. 18–20.
 - 32 See, for instance, Rossilli, Maria Grazia (1980), 'Movimento femminista e marxist-leninisti in Italia', *Donnawomanfemme*, 14, pp. 87–102; Ergas, Yasmine (1982), '1968–1979 – Feminism and the Italian Party System. Women's Politics in a Decade of Turmoil', *Comparative Politics*, 14 (3), pp. 253–79; Beckwith, Karen (1985), 'Feminism and Leftist Politics in Italy. The Case of UDI–PCI Relations', *West European Politics*, 8 (4), pp. 19–37.
 - 33 See the interesting reflections on this aspect in Marx Ferree, Myra and Gamson, William A. (1999), 'The Gendering of Abortion Discourse. Assessing Global Feminist Influence in the United States and Germany', in Donatella della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi and Dieter Rucht (eds), *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, New York: St Martin's Press, pp. 40–56.
 - 34 Tarrow, Sidney (1998), *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 156.
 - 35 See, for instance, Bourdieu, Pierre, Grignon, Claude and Passeron, Jean-Claude (1973), 'L'Evolution des chances d'accès à l'enseignement supérieur en France (1962–1966)', *Higher Education*, 2, pp. 407–22. Otherwise, the massive growth of higher education did give rise to the trend that the percentage of workers' children in universities increased. In West Germany, the number of students of working-class origin rose from 10.3 per cent in 1966 to 19.2 per cent in 1976. See Webler, Wolff-Dietrich (1980), 'The Sixties and the Seventies. Aspects of Student Activism in West Germany', *Higher Education*, 9, pp. 155–68 at p. 161.
 - 36 Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder*, pp. 30, 180 (citation).
 - 37 A detailed analysis of the coalition against the *Notstandsgesetze* can be found in Schneider, Michael (1986), *Demokratie in Gefahr? Der Konflikt um die Notstandsgesetze. Sozialdemokratie, Gewerkschaften und intellektueller Protest (1958–1968)*, Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft, esp. chs V and VI. In addition, there are several essays on

- further developments after 1968 in Küsel, Gudrun (ed.) (1978), *APO und Gewerkschaften. Von der Kooperation zum Bruch*, Berlin: Olle & Wolter.
- 38 Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder*, pp. 179–80. See also Lumley, *States of Emergency*, chs 9, 11, 12, 14.
 - 39 Tolomelli, Marico (1998), '1968. Formen der Interaktion zwischen Studenten- und Arbeiterbewegung in Italien und der Bundesrepublik', in Gilcher-Holtey, 1968 – *Vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft*, pp. 82–100 at p. 94.
 - 40 Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder*, pp. 180–81.
 - 41 Pizzorno, Alessandro (1978), 'Political Exchange and Collective Identity in Industrial Conflict', in Crouch and Pizzorno, *The Resurgence of Class Conflict*, Vol. 2: *Comparative Analyses*, pp. 277–98 at p. 294.
 - 42 Hemmer, Hans O. (1999), 'Die Gewerkschaften und die 68er – ein Annäherungsversuch', in Wolfgang, Lenk, Mechthild Rumpf and Lutz Hieber (eds), *Kritische theorie und politischer Eingriff. Oskar Negt zum 65. Geburtstag*, Hannover: Offizin, pp. 586–98 at p. 588.
 - 43 Ibid., p. 589.
 - 44 Ibid., pp. 590–91.
 - 45 Ibid., p. 587.
 - 46 Lang, Heinz-Günter (1978), 'Es kommt nur auf die richtigen Leute an ... Erfahrungen mit Intellektuellen und Studenten', in Küsel, *APO und Gewerkschaften*, pp. 14–28 at p. 18. There are few systematic studies of the views held by blue-collar workers at that time. An American example is Ransford, H. Edward (1972), 'Blue Collar Anger. Reactions to Student and Black Protest', *American Sociological Review*, 37, pp. 333–46.
 - 47 Crusius, Reinhard and Wilke, Manfred (1978), 'Von der Lehrlingsbewegung zur Jugendarbeitslosigkeit', in Küsel, *APO und Gewerkschaften*, pp. 85–95, at p. 85.
 - 48 This is the term used by Crusius and Wilke, 'Von der Lehrlingsbewegung zur Jugendarbeitslosigkeit', p. 89. Regrettably, this protest by young working people has so far been neglected by most historians. The only other serious study that I know is: Fuhlert, Lonny and Weblus, Margot (1974), *Lehrlingsbewegung in der BRD*, Berlin: Die Arbeitswelt. However, general discussions take up most of this small book. The actual historiography is on pp. 108–15.
 - 49 This Bill was preceded by strikes by women workers and other action. 'At the 1969 TUC Conference the T&GWU threw its weight firmly behind equal pay when it used one of the two resolutions to which it was entitled to put that issue before Congress. In the same year the Trade Union and Labour National Joint Action Committee for Equal Women's Rights was established to campaign for equal pay outside the TUC and in May 1969 a march of over 1,000 women demanded that Parliament enact an equal pay bill which received the support of Lady Summerskill.' Soldon, Norbert C. (1978), *Women in British Trade Unions 1874–1976*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, Rowman and Littlefield, p. 179. On legal aspects see Rendel, Margherita (1978), 'Legislating for Equal Pay and Opportunity for Women in Britain', *Signs*, 3 (4), pp. 897–906.
 - 50 Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions*, p. 179.
 - 51 Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge*, p. 57; Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions*, pp. 177–82.
 - 52 Beccalli, Bianca (1984), 'Italy', in Alice H. Cook, Val R. Lorwin and Arlene Kaplan Daniels (eds), *Women and Trade Unions in Eleven Industrialized Countries*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 184–214 at p. 199.
 - 53 For a description of the structure of the Women's Division (*Abteilung Frauen*, set up in 1949), see Lippe, Angelika (1983), *Gewerkschaftliche Frauenarbeit. Parallelität ihrer Probleme in Frankreich und in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1949–1979)*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, pp. 60–61.
 - 54 Cook, Alice H. (1984), 'Federal Republic of Germany', in Cook, Lorwin and Kaplan Daniels, *Women and Trade Unions in Eleven Industrialized Countries*, pp. 63–84 at p. 70.

- 55 Lippe, *Gewerkschaftliche Frauenarbeit*, Table 5 at p. 266.
- 56 Cook, 'Federal Republic of Germany', p. 73.
- 57 Calculation based on Wrigley, Chris (1997), *British Trade Unions 1945–1995*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, p. 30 (Table 4).
- 58 Cook, Alice H., Lorwin, Val R. and Kaplan Daniels, Arlene (1992), *The Most Difficult Revolution. Women and Trade Unions*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, pp. 51–52. See also Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions*, pp. 186–87.
- 59 CGT (1976), *Femmes à l'usine et aux bureaux*, Paris: CGT, 75. Here according to Lippe, *Gewerkschaftliche Frauenarbeit*, p. 171. Maruani, Margaret (1979), *Les syndicats à l'épreuve du féminisme*, Paris: Syros; Kergoat, Danielle (1978), 'Ouvriers = ouvrières?', *Critiques de l'économie politique*, 5, October–November, pp. 65–97.
- 60 Lippe, *Gewerkschaftliche Frauenarbeit*, p. 198.
- 61 Beccalli, 'Italy', pp. 198–99.
- 62 Jenson, Jane (1980), 'Feminism and the French Communist Party', *Socialist Register 1980*, pp. 121–47 at p. 125.
- 63 Jenson, Jane (1984), 'The "Problem" of Women', in Mark Kesselman (ed.), *The French Workers' Movement*, London: George Allen & Unwin, pp. 159–76 at p. 163.
- 64 Hansen, Alvin (1921), 'Cycles of Strikes', *American Economic Review*, 11, pp. 616–21.
- 65 See the excellent study by Boll, Friedhelm (1992), *Arbeitskämpfe und Gewerkschaften in Deutschland, England und Frankreich. Ihre Entwicklung vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Bonn: Dietz.
- 66 Harman, Chris (1988), *The Fire Last Time. 1968 and After*, London: Bookmarks, p. 346.
- 67 Zuffa, Grazia (1987), 'Le doppie militanze: donna comunista, donna femminista', *Memoria: rivista di storia delle donne*, 19–20, pp. 38–48.
- 68 A possible explanation of this theoretical gap is that these theories were mainly developed by scholars from the United States, a country where the role of political parties is far less conspicuous than in Western Europe.
- 69 The American sociologist and historian Charles Tilly is one of the most lucid theoreticians of social protest. He defines a social movement as: 'the deliberate, ostentatious mounting of a sustained challenge to powerholders in the name of a disadvantaged population living under the jurisdiction or influence of those powerholders. It entails the mobilization of large numbers of people around a set of claims by means of meetings, processions, demonstrations, petitions, slogans, symbols, committees, publicly proclaimed strategies, and related means.' Tilly, Charles (1995), *Popular Contention in Britain, 1758–1834*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 369. This definition is not very precise and does not establish unequivocal criteria either.
- 70 For instance McAdam, Doug, McCarthy, John D. and Zald, Mayer N. (1988), 'Social Movements', in: Smelser, Neil J. (ed.), *Handbook of Sociology*, Newbury Park [etc.]: Sage, pp. 695–737; Ahlemeyer, Heinrich (1989), 'Was ist eine soziale Bewegung? Zur Distinktion und Einheit eines sozialen Phänomens', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 18, pp. 175–91; or Diani, Mario (1992), 'The Concept of Social Movement', *Sociological Review*, 40, pp. 1–25.
- 71 Rammstedt, Otthein (1978), *Soziale Bewegung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 27–31.
- 72 Raschke, Joachim (1985), *Soziale Bewegungen. Ein historisch-systematischer Abriss*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, pp. 77–78.
- 73 We read for instance in Goldberg: 'A social movement is a formally organized group that acts consciously and with some continuity to promote or resist change through collective action.' Goldberg, Robert A. (1991), *Grassroots Resistance. Social Movements in Twentieth Century America*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, p. 2.

- 74 Zald, Mayer N. and Berger, Michael A. (1977–1978), 'Social Movements in Organizations. Coup d'état, Insurgency, and Mass Movements', *American Journal of Sociology*, **83**, pp. 823–61.
- 75 Smelser, Neil J. (1962), *Theory of Collective Behavior*, New York: Free Press, ch. 1.
- 76 Raschke, *Soziale Bewegungen*, pp. 79–80.
- 77 See the bibliography in Pichardo, Nelson A. (1997), 'New Social Movements. A Critical Review', *Annual Review of Sociology*, **23**, pp. 411–30.
- 78 See, for instance, the comparison between the British Chartists (1838–50), the Oneida Community in the United States (1848–81) and the West German peace movement (1945–83), in D'Anieri, Paul, Ernst, Claire and Klier, Elizabeth (1989–1990), 'New Social Movements in Historical Perspective', *Comparative Politics*, **22**, pp. 445–58.
- 79 Tilly, Charles (1988), 'Social Movements, Old and New', *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, **10**, pp. 1–18.
- 80 Calhoun, Craig (1993), "'New Social Movements" of the Early Nineteenth Century', *Social Science History*, **17**, pp. 385–427.



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Chapter 9

Crossing the Borders of US–American Labour History

Introduction

The work of most American labour historians is still characterized by a distinct methodological nationalism, which prestructures their writings, often with a rather strict separation of studies of the United States and of other countries. This short chapter solely intends to present a few impressions of possible directions in which transnational American labour history could be developed, following on from the work that has already been done by a minority of American and non-American labour historians.

Three Examples

In principle, all conceivable aspects of American labour history are open to a transnational reinterpretation, as the development of the working class and the labour movement in the United States can only be understood if the mobility of people, capital, information and ideas across borders is seriously considered.

To illustrate this, I shall focus on the expressions of transnationalism in labour movements, as they become apparent in organizational practices and repertoires of contention. This is not just a matter of influences ‘from outside’ on the labour movements in the United States, but also of the influences of US labour on ‘foreign’ movements. Labour transnationalism can assume a great many forms. To simplify the matter, we could distinguish three relevant aspects: solidarity; organizational models; and industrial relations.

Transnational Workers’ Solidarity

Transnational workers’ solidarity is a richly varied phenomenon and can have many points of departure. It could be a matter of ‘long-distance nationalism’ on an ethnic basis, in which case, for instance, Irish people in North America feel a tie with Ireland.¹ A second variant is the Pan-African solidarity that many African-Americans feel with the people in sub-Saharan Africa – a solidarity that has developed especially since the end of the Second World War and in which workers’ struggles have occasionally played an important part.²

Political transnational solidarity is a third variant. It is well known that at an early stage American labour militants and socialists were already interested in relevant political developments elsewhere, especially in Europe. This was the case, for instance, with the Paris Commune,³ Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law of 1878,⁴ and the Russian radical movement of the early twentieth century.⁵ Likewise, the European labour movements took an early interest in what was happening in the United States.⁶ British workers in particular, but also French workers, were concerned about the American Civil War,⁷ and socialists in the labour movements influenced each other, sometimes from a great distance. The international diffusion of Daniel de Leon's ideas,⁸ International Women's Day (an American invention with a worldwide impact),⁹ the connection in the context of the so-called Second International and its successor organizations,¹⁰ and, of course, the Communist International and its affiliates in the United States,¹¹ provide only a few examples.

Such transnational connections were sometimes conveyed by substantial practical aid, such as that given by the American workers who supported the opening up of the Kuzbas (Kuznetsk Basin) in the Soviet Union, or by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America who helped to operate and modernize clothing and textile factories in Moscow and Petrograd through a Russian-American industrial corporation.¹²

A fourth variant of transnational solidarity follows more from economic motives. By supporting groups of labourers abroad, one strengthens one's own bargaining position. When, for instance, the window glass workers in the United States in the 1880s saw how their labour monopoly was threatened by the import of English, French and Belgian glass workers, they responded, among other things, by going to the source (that is, the imported glass-blowers' countries of origin) to convince their fellow tradesmen that their conduct was improper, and assemblies in Europe were successfully organized.¹³ This recurrent pattern in American labour history has not been investigated systematically.

A different situation prevails among the segments of the working class employed in industries that rely on raw materials from other countries; they tend to have an interest in their foreign colleagues earning low wages and are therefore less likely to engage in acts of solidarity.¹⁴

Transnational Models

On several occasions American labour organizations have served as role models for workers in other countries. Transnational diffusion of American organizational models took place through migration and remigration, sailors, cross-border activities and conscious 'foreign policy'.

The first major role model was probably the Knights of Labor (with whom the aforementioned window glass workers were affiliated). During the final decades of the nineteenth century, their organizational model was adopted in Britain, as well as in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France and New Zealand.¹⁵

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the worldwide popularity of the Wobblies (supporters of the Industrial Workers of the World) easily matched

that of the Knights of Labor. Workers in many countries came to view the IWW (which partly reflected the cultural influence of the French syndicalist *Confédération Générale du Travail*¹⁶) as a model of radical unionism. Sailors brought the IWW's opinions to countries such as Chile, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa,¹⁷ while cross-border activities and remigration extended the propagation of ideas to Mexico and Norway.¹⁸

While the Knights of Labor and the IWW served as role models for trade unionists in other countries through the example they set and their power of persuasion, the American Federation of Labor (later the AFL-CIO), penetrated other countries through a great show of strength in the course of the twentieth century. For a while, collaboration between the labour federation, the US government and big business was so close that it was likened by some to a corporative structure, a *blocco storico à la* Antonio Gramsci.¹⁹ This process started in the aftermath of 1898, when the AFL established connections with the fledgling union movements on the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Cuba.²⁰ This policy became consolidated during and immediately after the First World War and probably peaked after the Second World War.²¹ In Europe the AFL (and, since 1955, the AFL-CIO) convinced minorities to leave labour movements viewed as communist, such as in France and Italy in the late 1940s and in Portugal in the 1970s.²² In 1959–61 the AFL established the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), which enabled still more forceful penetration in Latin American trade unions. The institute, which received funding from sources such as USAID and had prominent American businessmen on its board, trained thousands of Latin American labour officials ('agents of influence') and supported agreeable unions. The AIFLD's direct involvement in, for example, the overthrow of the governments of Cheddi Jagan in British Guiana (1963), João Goulart in Brazil (1964), and Salvador Allende in Chile (1973) is a subject of controversy but is likely to have been substantial.²³

Since the 1970s, part of the 'historical block' has been undermined. American economic power waned, while competition from Asia and Europe intensified. Capital flight, runaway industries and an increasing market share held by foreign firms caused the disappearance of jobs in the United States and rendered tripartite cooperation a less self-evident option for the unions.

Transnational Labour Relations

The American labour movement has influenced the Canadian trade unions so heavily over the past century and a half that to call the American organizations a model for their Canadian counterparts would be an understatement. More accurately, labour relations in both countries became closely intertwined and even formed a single 'transnational system' from the 1920s to the 1960s or 1970s.²⁴

This extremely extensive integration arose from areas of close interdependence between the two economies. While Canada and the United States were 'never entirely collapsible into a single unit, general patterns and parallels of striking similarity' certainly existed.²⁵ The relationship between the two

countries was not based on equality: the United States dominated in economic areas and labour relations alike. Back in the 1860s, US-based 'international' trade unions established their presence in Canada (for example, among railway workers, printers, moulders, coopers, and cigar makers).²⁶ Expansion into Canada appeared to be a logical step for American unions because of the downward pressure on wages resulting from labour's cross-border mobility. The Canadian workers, in turn, often welcomed the opportunity to join American unions because of their greater financial solvency and organizational experience. In the 1950s some 70 per cent of all organized Canadian workers were members of international unions.²⁷

During the years that followed, American influences continued to dominate the Canadian labour movement. Accordingly, an ongoing but asymmetric relationship prevailed between the American and many of the Canadian unions for decades; although Canadian unions were included in a single labour relations system for most intents and purposes, the decisions were taken in the United States rather than in Canada. The balance suggests a centre-periphery dependency.²⁸

Since the 1960s, this transnational system has gradually weakened. First, while the relative extent of unionization in the United States stagnated and then declined, it grew in Canada. Second, ties strengthened between the Canadian unions and the political parties (the New Democratic Party and the Parti Québécois). Moreover, Canada – unlike the United States – has long had a highly regulated system of collective bargaining and a tradition of government involvement in labour affairs, as was borne out during the interventionism in the public sector negotiations in the 1970s. The disintegration of the transnational system of labour relations has revealed two different underlying traditions. While the Canadian pattern of interventionism (established in the early part of the century) was 'comparatively latent' under the transnational system, it was 'available for active invocation' at other points in time.²⁹

Three Extensions

The forms of transnationalism, briefly outlined above, are all within the range of 'classical' labour history; they predominantly apply to workers' movements, and in particular to the institutional aspects of these movements. I have selected these examples because the transnational approach to labour history is, relatively speaking, most advanced in these areas. However, in no way do I want to give the impression that transnational labour history should restrict itself to institutional aspects.

In the first place, working-class institutions are, of course, only one element of much broader class processes – an insight that has become generally accepted at the latest since the reception of Edward P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Labour history not only deals with trade unions, political doctrines or strikes, but also with workplace cultures, family life, non-wage survival strategies, religious traditions and so on.

Unfortunately, class formation is often conceptualized as a *national* process. It is common to speak about the 'growth' or the 'making' of American,

Mexican or Japanese working classes, almost as if these developments are neatly confined to certain nation-state borders. In part, this is understandable because '[the] central place of the national state in class analysis can be justified by its role in filtering world-system effects'.³⁰ Over the course of time almost every working class has experienced conscious and not-so-conscious influences that have contributed to its national integration,³¹ but this should not lead us to overlook the existence of other influences which do not fit well into a national framework. Here, I'm thinking on the one hand of subnational processes like the formation of regional identities, including border-region cultures, and, on the other hand, of international influences.

The most important cross-border influence in class formation is probably migration, especially migration which the people involved expect to be of a temporary nature. Sociologists and anthropologists nowadays assert that economic globalization has changed the nature of immigrants. Whereas in the past immigrants either left their country of origin only briefly or became 'uprooted' persons who left their home country forever to embark on a painstaking process of integration in another country, these days increasing numbers of migrants are understood as 'transmigrants', that is, 'immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state'. They are simultaneously engaged in two nation-states, 'in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated'.³²

This conceptualization has the definitive merit of showing that ethnic boundary demarcation does not exclusively take place within a national unit. But the underlying assumption that the pattern is entirely new is incorrect. Obviously, modern methods of transportation and communication aid migrants far more in maintaining contact with their region of origin than the means previously available. It would, however, be fallacious to think that migrants from previous eras did not stay in touch with their source communities. African-American slaves were obviously unable to sustain their ties, but indentured and free migrants corresponded with their family members and friends, remitted parts of their wages, and even returned for brief visits or permanently.³³

In some respects, transnational contacts have frequently led immigrants to live in two places at once. Those who perceived themselves as being *inside and outside* the United States experienced an ongoing process of double identity formation³⁴ – a process that was further complicated by the fact that the migrants simultaneously belonged to gendered and socially stratified societies both in their source community and in their new area of residence. All this had significant consequences for the making of the American working class. The further exploration of these consequences and their implications for the multiple cross-border connections is a fascinating challenge for the future.³⁵

In addition to migration there are other transnational influences on class-formation. For two centuries or more, transnational flows of information have existed, through private correspondence or international workers' organiza-

tions.³⁶ Also relevant are transnational corporations, which unintentionally forge ties between workers living on different continents.

This brings me to a second consideration. The contact between workers in separate nation-states does not always take place directly. A great deal of communication occurs through third parties. Take, for instance, international exhibitions. Since the mid-nineteenth century these have frequently acted as intermediaries between workers from different countries or even continents.³⁷ The tripartite International Labour Organization (ILO) provides another example. This institution, founded in 1919, attempts to establish certain international labour standards (for example, the right to organize and bargain collectively, or the right to equality of opportunity and treatment in employment) by stipulating so-called Covenants that have to be ratified by its member states.³⁸ The ILO's activities influence the quality of working-class life and the substance of workers' struggles in numerous countries. A third, very important, example is offered by the mass media. During the last four or five decades American movies have had a considerable impact on working-class cultures in other countries – although non-American working-class families naturally reappropriate American films and construct meanings to fit their own realities.³⁹

My third and final consideration is obvious: working classes can not be understood by focusing only on material aspects. Labour transnationalism is always a combination of material and symbolic practices. It is often not difficult to understand the material side of transnationalism. Many trade unions, for instance, will usually only undertake cross-border activities when these seem to be efficient for the realization of the members' goals – unless such activities are relatively cheap and not particularly time-consuming and/or are also rewarding for individual officials, such as sending delegations to conferences of foreign sister organizations or telegraphing declarations of solidarity.⁴⁰

The symbolic side of labour transnationalism requires more interpretive efforts. Take, for example, the strong influence of quasi-Masonic ritual in American workers' organizations. On the one hand, this is a clear example of transnational diffusion, because these rituals originated in Britain and later spread to the settler colonies in Australasia and North America. But, on the other hand, Americans translated these ritual traditions in their own ways. The Independent Order of Red Men of the late nineteenth century, for example, combined Anglo-Saxon ritual with presumed Native American symbols (tomahawk, bow and arrow and so on).⁴¹ However, the historical analysis of such symbolic constructions is little advanced and is admittedly very difficult. First, the symbols may have a self-referential quality and, second, the meanings they represent should be placed in multiple and fluid cultural contexts.⁴² Symbolic aspects can also overrule material short-term interests or be transformed into material interests in their own right.

Historical research of this subject is still in its infancy⁴³ and I can only make a few very tentative suggestions for further reflection. Maybe the multiple identities approach could be a useful starting point, since it tries to move away from outdated discussions about whether to give priority to gender, race or

class in labour studies, in order to reconstruct how gender identity, race identity and class identity have 'shaped each other'.⁴⁴ The multiple identities approach usually emphasizes that different identities together produce multifaceted individuals and groups. That is the great virtue of this approach, and little can be said against that. However, keeping transnational working classes in mind, it is also necessary to recognize that people with multifaceted identities have multiple interests and can therefore create collectivities in various ways. And a collective identity is always based on a perceived community of the members of that collectivity and on criteria for exclusion which determine who can definitely not be considered a member of the group. Important questions that come to the fore, then are: how do certain transnational identities come into being and how do they develop? And how do they relate to other identities?

Needless to say, the above reflections are provisional and require much further thought. It is also needless to say that a transnational interpretation of American labour history cannot *replace* the older national approach, unless it *includes* and simultaneously relativizes the nation-state, precisely by taking this state seriously and by placing it in a wider perspective. If we succeed in developing such a new interpretation, we will begin to see how 'familiar phenomena' of American (working-class) history make 'better sense in transnational perspectives than in familiar nation-centered terms'.⁴⁵

Notes

- 1 Anderson, Benedict (1992), *London Distance Nationalism. World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics*, Amsterdam: CASA.
- 2 Von Eschen, Penny M. (1997), *Race Against Empire. Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- 3 Bernstein, Rose and Bernstein, Samuel (1951), 'Répercussions de la Commune de Paris aux Etats-Unis', *Cahiers Internationaux*, **24**, pp. 11–32; Bernstein, Samuel (1951), 'American Labor and the Paris Commune', *Science and Society*, **15**, pp. 144–62; Recht, Jean-Jacques (1972), 'La Commune de Paris et les Etats-Unis', *La Pensée*, **164**, pp. 99–120.
- 4 Foner, Philip S. (1976), 'Protests in the United States against Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law', *International Review of Social History*, **21**, pp. 30–50.
- 5 Good, Jane E. (1982), 'America and the Russian Revolutionary Movement, 1888–1905', *Russian Review*, **41**, pp. 273–87; Thompson, Arthur W. (1966), 'The Reception of Russian Revolutionary Leaders in America, 1904–1906', *American Quarterly*, **18**, pp. 452–76.
- 6 See, for instance, Hecht, David (1947), *Russian Radicals Look to America, 1825–1894*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press on Herzen, Ogarev, Bakunin, Chernyshevski, Lavrov, and Chaikovski; or Obermann, Karl (1973), 'Beziehungen zwischen den europäischen Fortschrittskräften und den USA im 19. Jahrhundert', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte*, **13**, pp. 71–108.
- 7 Park, Joseph H. (1924), 'The English Workingmen and the American Civil War', *Political Science Quarterly*, **39**, pp. 432–57; Greenleaf, R. (1953), 'British Labour Against American Slavery', *Science and Society*, **17**, pp. 42–58; Harrison, Royden (1957), 'British Labour and the Confederacy', *International Review of Social History*, **2**, pp. 78–105; idem (1961), 'British Labor and American Slavery', *Science*

- and Society, 25, pp. 291–319; Bernstein, Samuel (1953), 'The Opposition of French Labor to American Slavery', *Science & Society*, 17, pp. 136–54.
- 8 Stevenson, James A. (1980), 'Daniel de Leon and European Socialism, 1890–1914', *Science and Society*, 44, pp. 199–223.
 - 9 Kaplan, Temma (1985), 'On the Socialist Origins of International Women's Day', *Feminist Studies*, 11 (1), pp. 163–71.
 - 10 Basset, Michael (1965), 'The American Socialist Party and the War, 1917–1918', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 11, pp. 277–91; Miller, Sally M. (1980), 'American Socialist Women and the Second International', *ITH-Tagungsberichte 13-II*, Vienna: Europaverlag, pp. 670–89.
 - 11 See, for example, the controversial volume: Klehr, Harvey, Haynes, John E. and Anderson, Kirill M. (1998), *The Soviet World of American Communism*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
 - 12 Morray, J.P. (1983), *Project Kuzbas. American Workers in Siberia, 1921–1926*, New York: International Publishers; Fraser, Steve (1983), 'The "New Unionism" and the "New Economic Policy"', in James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (eds), *Work, Community, and Power. The Experience of Labor in Europe and America, 1900–1925*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 173–96.
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- 40 Logue, John (1980), *Toward a Theory of Trade Union Internationalism*, Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, p. 11.
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Chapter 10

International Trade Unionism: A Long View

Introduction

Trade unions' earliest cross-border activities date back to the first half of the nineteenth century. Initial attempts at international cooperation proved fragile and shortlived.¹ Only in the 1880s and 1890s did the first stable organizational structures emerge. In the course of the twentieth century they grew into giant institutions, of which the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), founded in 1949, is now by far the most important. In this chapter I analyse some of the background to the international trade unionism that consolidated itself in the twentieth century – paying particular attention to the ICFTU – and offer some thoughts about the future.

Why International Activities?

The first logical question is: why is the trade-union movement active internationally? Answering this question is surprisingly complicated. While international solidarity appears obvious, myriad opposing short-term interests, political obstacles and cultural differences severely impede cross-national cooperation. Nationalism, competition among workers from different countries and mutual misunderstanding need to be overcome time and again. The success of this effort depends on several factors.

The oldest positive factor may well be economic. By supporting groups of workers abroad, one strengthens one's own bargaining position. The emergence of the International Federation of Transport Workers in 1896 should be interpreted from such a perspective: British dockers felt threatened by competition from their counterparts on the Continent and responded by founding chapters in Rotterdam and Antwerp.²

A second economic mechanism concerns transnational product markets rather than transnational labour markets. Consider the support given by the United Steel Workers of America to the bauxite miners in Jamaica in the 1950s. The reason was explained clearly in the inaugural speech delivered by David J. McDonald upon becoming president of the USWA:

You have all been reading about the development of iron ore mines in Venezuela and Guatemala and the development of bauxite mines, which as you know, we use for the manufacture of aluminium, in Jamaica.

We must have concern for the working conditions of the iron ore miners in the United States and Canada. We must protect their standards. I don't know how you mean you can protect their standards if thousands of virtually enslaved men go down into the mines of Venezuela, Guatemala, and Jamaica for a standard wage of a dollar a day. ... Great rich[es] of ore, owned by American corporations, are being developed by American corporations to be worked by the natives of those countries at miserable wages. I propose we look into this problem.³

In such an instance transnational solidarity provides a solution to competition for distribution opportunities.

The third economic mechanism concerns transnational capital. As more corporations open up branches in several countries, their employees will experience a growing need to work together cross-nationally. According to Dan Gallin, the former general secretary of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Association, the primary issue is 'to prevent a company from gaining an advantage from differences existing between countries with respect to the degree of union-organization, union militancy, and union-strength, working conditions, wages or government policy'.⁴

This is often easier said than done. Divergent living and working conditions in different countries make formulating a unanimous international policy complicated. For this reason and others, the so-called world councils have been rather fragile constructions thus far.⁵

Aside from economic factors, international lobbying is important. In all efforts to establish international regulations directly affecting wage-earners or attempts by different governments to harmonize legislation, trade union confederations will obviously try to coordinate their influence. Since the late 1960s, for example, the governments of the advanced industrialized countries have sought to harmonize their national legislation on chemicals to avert trade conflicts and ensure equal conditions for competition. In over a decade this harmonization has been accomplished in stages comprising regulatory measures in countries such as Switzerland (1969), Japan (1973), the United States (1976), France (1977), and Germany (1980). Clearly, this harmonization will affect not only the environment and consumers but also all employees working with chemical substances in the relevant countries. The attempt by the international trade union movement to influence this process of regulation was therefore understandable.

Another case concerns the International Labour Organization established in 1919. This Organization formulates Draft Conventions and Recommendations regarding international labour standards.⁶ The Draft Conventions then need to be ratified by the countries party to the ILO, although this often does not happen. As known, the annual conferences of the ILO comprise three distinct groups: the Government Group, the Employers' Group and the Workers' Group.⁷ Coordinated action has consistently enabled the international trade union movement to exert considerable influence on the Workers' Group.

Moreover, general solidarity has been conducive to establishing cross-national cooperation between trade unions on several occasions. Many activities are not attributable to the short-term interests of groups of workers but arise from a more general sense of a common predicament. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, the refusal of dockers to transship goods originating from, or bound for, South Africa had nothing to do with economic interests and everything with compassion for their oppressed black co-workers.

Often, such manifestations of solidarity reflect political or personal ideologies as well. Socialism became important in the process very early on. The abundant contacts established between militants from different countries at congresses of the socialist 'Second International', for example, is far from coincidental. As a knowledgeable observer once wrote: 'the socialist congresses of Zurich in 1893 and of London in 1896, which brought workers of many countries together, and which urged upon them the idea of international organization, did much to accelerate' the formation of International Trade Secretariats (ITSs).⁸ After all, socialists assumed that the capitalist world system could be surmounted or curtailed only by a united world working class.

The syndicalist International Working Men's Association and the communist Profintern (Red International of Trade Unions (RITU), 1921–37) of the inter-war years also derived from such ideas but were far more critical of international social democracy.⁹

All these ideological or religious motives of internationalism were mainly symbolic: they let trade union members in different countries know that they were not alone and that their brothers and sisters elsewhere were fighting the same battle. This symbolic nature is also expressed in international petitions or statements of solidarity. Although these attributes often have very few practical ramifications, their importance to the movements is considerable.¹⁰

Moreover, all the motives for trade union internationalism mentioned here may be counteracted by other motives. Take, for instance, those segments of the working class employed in industries that rely on raw materials from other countries; they tend to have an interest in low wages among their foreign colleagues and in the uninterrupted supply of raw materials. Therefore, they are less likely to engage in acts of solidarity.¹¹ Likewise, political lobbying can impede international solidarity, and the political ideology of transnational solidarity regularly clashes with racist convictions.

Trade union internationalism therefore does not arise automatically from workers' interests but needs to be achieved time and again. The effort's success and the process depend largely on the general political situation. During periods of sweeping radicalization (for example, 1917–20, 1968–73) internationalism that is not inspired by short-term economic concerns stands a better chance than in times of moderation.¹²

A Persistent Dual Structure

Virtually from the outset the international trade union movement has had a dual structure: on the one hand the cross-national cooperation between

workers in the same occupations (International Trade Secretariats) and, on the other hand, the joint efforts of national trade union confederations.

Economic motives were paramount in the establishment of the first International Trade Secretariats. The printers, for example, were highly skilled workers with international mobility. They had long-standing cross-national relationships, especially within separate linguistic regions (for instance, the French region, comprising France and parts of Belgium and Switzerland) and, as early as the 1860s, attended the conferences of fraternal trade organizations in other countries. Here, issues like the *viaticum* (travel money) loomed large. Their attempts at building an international federation started around 1880. The convention of 17 delegates of printers' unions in Paris, in July 1889, gave rise to an ITS.¹³

Around the same time and in the same city there was a meeting of over 100 delegates from miners' unions in Britain, France, Germany and Austria; less than a year later they formed the International Miners' Federation. Once again, economic motives came into play. Charles Fenwick, the secretary of the North English Miners' National Union noted that, on the Continent, working conditions were worse and wages lower than in Great Britain; an international alliance was therefore desirable to improve working conditions and wages on the Continent and to protect British miners from cheap coal.¹⁴

The printers and miners were pioneers. Many other International Trade Secretariats soon followed: 'Aside from the example of the printers and of the miners, the formation of Trade Secretariats after 1890 was stimulated by the growth of trade unions in many countries, by strikes which attracted international attention, and by the congresses of the Second International.'¹⁵ By 1900 there were 17 International Trade Secretariats. On the eve of the First World War in 1914 the figure had risen to 28.¹⁶

Working relations between national trade union confederations were entirely different. These confederations in Western Europe and North America were formed around the final decades of the nineteenth century (see Table 10.1).

Only with this process under way did the establishment of an International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centres (ISNTUC) become possible.¹⁷ Following exploratory gatherings between trade unionists from different countries in Copenhagen (1901) and Stuttgart (1902), an International Centre was organized in Dublin in 1903 under the aegis of Carl Legien, the leader of the German trade union movement.

The brief period between 1889 and 1903 was therefore exceptionally important for the subsequent rise of the international trade union movement. The structures devised during those years remained largely unchanged throughout the twentieth century. The labour economist James Scoville has rightly observed that 'the initial structure of the labor movement exercises an impact on the future course of its evolution'. The causes are 'the persistence of ideology formed at the beginning', 'the survival imperative of institutions', and the labour movement's influence on the society around it, which subsequently reverberates on the movement.¹⁸

The course of events a century ago has given the international trade union movement a dual structure: International Trade Secretariats and international

Table 10.1 The founding years of some national trade union confederations

1868	Great Britain	Trades Union Congress
1880	Switzerland	Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund
1883	Canada	Trades and Labour Congress of Canada
1886	United States	American Federation of Labor
1888	Spain	Unión General de Trabajadores
1890	Germany	Generalkommission der Freien Gewerkschaften Deutschlands
1893	Austria	Reichsgewerkschaftskommission
1893	The Netherlands	Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat
1895	France	Confédération Générale du Travail
1898	Belgium	Commission Syndicale
1898	Sweden	Landsorganisationen i Sverige
1898	Denmark	Det Samvirkende Fagforbund i Danmark
1898	Hungary	Szakszervezeti Tanács
1899	Norway	Landsorganisasjonen
1906	The Netherlands	Nederlandsch Verbond van Vakverenigingen
1906	Italy	Confederazione Generale del Lavoro

Source: Dreyfus, Michel (2000), 'The Emergence of an International Trade Union Organization (1902–1919)', in Marcel Van der Linden (ed.), *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, Berne: Peter Lang Academic, pp. 25–71 at pp. 28–29.

confederations (with changing names). This structure is not necessarily the most logical one. Conceivably, the International Trade Secretariats could have formed an international federation independently. In that case, only one international umbrella organization would exist today, and such an arrangement would probably have been more effective (see Figure 10.1). Occasionally, individuals suggested reorganizing the movement in this way (for example, Edo Fimmen of the International Transportworkers Federation in the 1920s). However, this was to no avail: the forces of institutional inertia prevailed.¹⁹

Why did the International Trade Secretariats not form their own federation from the outset? One possible reason is that they focused on direct economic aspects (the worldwide problems of certain industries), whereas the ICFTU and its precursors (including the IFTU) were more politically oriented.²⁰

Nonetheless, the operations of International Trade Secretariats and the international confederations consistently overlapped considerably, which often made for tense relations.²¹

Collective Bargaining as Ideology

Politics has always been essential for the ICFTU and its precursors. Only the *substance* of the politics supported by the international trade union movement has changed. The IFTU still used Marxist terminology and believed that capitalism should be abolished; the ICFTU never made any such statements. As an observer once noted, 'For the first time an international trade union

Country X	Country Y	.....	Country Z	
Trade union of occupational group A	Trade union of occupational group A	....	Trade union of occupational group A	ITS of occupational group A
Trade union of occupational group B	Trade union of occupational group B	....	Trade union of occupational group B	ITS of occupational group B
.
.
.
.
Trade union of occupational group N	Trade union of occupational group N	....	Trade union of occupational group N	ITS of occupational group N
National trade union confederation X	National trade union confederation Y	....	National trade union confederation Z	Federation of ITSs A–N <i>or</i> Confederation of national trade union confederations X–Z

Figure 10.1 The logic of international trade union cooperation

organization with strong Socialist participation, threw overboard the A B C's of its predecessors, such as class struggle, overthrow of the economic system, and centralization'.²²

The famous manifesto *Bread, Freedom, Peace*, which was adopted at the organization's establishment in 1949 (and quoted with approval decades later) and replaced the old concepts, emphasized the importance of 'economic and political democracy', believed to be 'inseparable'.²³ Both economic and political democracy obviously lend themselves to several interpretations. The manifesto defines economic democracy as the 'full participation by workers' organisations in economic decisions affecting planning, production and distribution' (that is, codetermination within capitalism). Nothing was to impede the pursuit of profits. Only in cases where 'economic interests block the road to human progress' might the private sector accommodate 'public planning for people'.²⁴ Admittedly, some delegates to the preparatory discussion, such as Hans Böckler from Germany, defended the old view that capitalist society should be replaced by 'an economic system in which the needs of the people are the only incentive to production'.²⁵ This interpretation, however, did not receive general support, although it remained an under-current within the organization.

The ICFTU originally viewed political democracy as parliamentary democracy with free collective bargaining. The organization vehemently opposed all leftist and rightist dictatorships ('Fascist, Falangist, corporative, militarist, Communist, or of any other form'), which were perceived as reflections of each other in keeping with the totalitarianism theory that arose in the 1930s.²⁶ Logically, therefore, the 'so-called trade unions' of 'totalitarian' countries were characterized as 'governmental instruments designed for the organised exploitation of workers for the benefit of a tyrannical state'.²⁷ Initially, it was believed that support for political democracy might coincide with a 'third way' beyond capitalism and communism.²⁸ Later, however, the ICFTU opted unilaterally for capitalism (despite the ongoing objections to major concentrations of economic power) and the Western military apparatus, including NATO.²⁹

The specific ICFTU interpretation of economic and political democracy concealed a well-circumscribed idea of 'proper' trade unions and the political constellations that would enable them to function optimally. Trade unions in 'the free and industrialised nations of the world' were considered a model – albeit an imperfect one – for all other countries.³⁰ This view obviously had major implications for the organization's actions outside the advanced capitalist nations.³¹

One of the ICFTU's goals from the outset was 'to provide assistance in the establishment, maintenance, and development of trade-union organisation, particularly in economically and socially under-developed countries'.³² It was assumed that 'proper' trade unions would (i) remain entirely independent of political parties and states; (ii) concentrate on collective bargaining and lobbying for social security legislation; (iii) defend and promote parliamentary democracy. Often, these principles proved difficult to apply in the so-called Third World.³³ Much later, Adolf Sturmthal observed that, especially in the Anglo-American countries (whose trade unions dominated the ICFTU), there had been 'a naive belief in the universal applicability of some form of collective bargaining'.³⁴ He listed a series of conditions for 'a genuine collective bargaining system', including 'a legal and political system permitting the existence and functioning of reasonably *free* labor organizations' (a condition that was fully compatible with the early ICFTU views) and the requirement that 'unions be more or less stable, reasonably well organized, and fairly evenly matched with the employers in bargaining strength'.³⁵

Effective unions have rarely if ever been organized by 'non-committed' workers, i.e., casual workers who change jobs frequently, return periodically to their native village, and have no specific industrial skill, even of a very simple kind. Yet even fully committed industrial workers with little or no skill are capable of engaging in effective collective bargaining only under certain conditions which are rarely found. In most (though by no means all) newly industrializing countries, large excess supplies of common labor are available for nonagricultural work. Not only are unskilled workers rarely capable of forming unions of their own under such conditions; if they succeed in doing so, their unions have little or no bargaining power.³⁶

Since the 1970s some of these insights have penetrated the ICFTU leadership as well. Consequently, there is a growing awareness that a truly global trade union movement calls for a perception of trade unionism that is based less rigidly on a regional model (that is, the model of the capitalist core countries).

Centre-Periphery Relations

This brings me to the relation between trade unions from the core capitalist countries with their counterparts on the periphery. For a long time the international trade union movement virtually ignored the so-called Third World.³⁷ During the years preceding the First World War collaborative efforts between trade unions were limited to Europe and North America in nearly all cases.

This situation persisted for some time after 1918. When, during his opening address at the congress in 1927, IFTU chairman A.A. Purcell mentioned his desire for an alliance between the trade unions in the colonies, the other board members stipulated that this view was Purcell's personal opinion.³⁸ For several reasons, change came only during the Depression from 1929 onwards. The IFTU experienced competition from the RITU, which had been established in 1921 and sought to expand its influence in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.³⁹ Another factor was the concurrent growth of the labour movement in the Third World, which made the question as to which course it would pursue all the more urgent.

While the IFTU responded by launching activities of its own, the political principles remained rooted in the colonial ideology. The general guideline was the programme of the LSI (Labour and Socialist International), which had been adopted at the Brussels Congress of 1928 and was questionable in many respects. The programme was dubious primarily because it was based on a linear development model of human cultures that placed the advanced capitalist countries at the highest level. The remaining peoples were assigned various ranks and graded on a cultural scale depending on the enthusiasm with which the labour movement in the *métropoles* had pursued their liberation. The course of gradual decolonization supported within the programme of the LSI on colonial policy reflected the views of the leading officials within the IFTU, which held that some peoples were not yet ready for the right to self-determination. The resulting need to 'educate' them would entail a more paternalist approach.⁴⁰

The IFTU campaigned for protective measures for the colonial working classes. The members of the ILO's Workers' Group repeatedly urged extending the Conventions to the colonies. The Workers' Group also ensured that the ILO dealt with forced labour from 1926 onwards and adopted a Convention on the subject in 1930.

On the other hand, the IFTU was far from a consistent supporter of 'peripheral' workers with respect to international migration. Trade unions from immigration countries (the United States, Canada, Australia) in particular tried to curtail or halt immigration from Asia; and the existence

of racist, in addition to economic, motives became apparent when the Australian delegate at the world migration conference organized jointly by the IFTU and the LSI (London, 1926) argued that his country should remain white. The French and Belgian trade unions were willing to permit immigration only if jobs were indeed available.⁴¹ The only dissenting forces were the ITSs of textile workers and hotel, restaurant and bar workers who opposed any restriction of freedom of movement: rather than leaving the solutions to potential problems to the state, they urged that the trade unions address these issues through joint consultation.⁴²

Even after the war, it was quite a while before paternalism toward the semi-colonial and colonial trade unions made way for a more equal relationship. As noted above, the ICFTU continued trying to export Western models of trade unionism for a very long time. Differences in values clearly existed, especially between the American and the British approaches. During the Second World War the British TUC moved toward 'a close relationship with the government in developing labour policy in the colonies' and therefore often emulated the enlightened extension of a colonial power in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.⁴³ Peter Weiler has noted that:

TUC activities ... helped to perpetuate the British empire. In part, this effect was unintentional. The TUC urged colonial trade unions to follow the same moderate reformist path that it did at home, although reformism produced different results in the colonies than it did in Britain. British workers had at least the political possibility to change their society while colonial workers did not. Thus, although reformism was not endorsed as part of a calculated strategy to preserve British rule, it inevitably had that effect. On another level, however, this effect *was* intended because British labor leaders accepted the idea of Britain's imperial mission and rejected any violent attempts to end it.⁴⁴

In some respects the AFL-CIO was the mirror image of the TUC. This trade union confederation also worked closely with its own government in its operations abroad and therefore opposed colonialism – as well as the organizations of the periphery that formed alliances with anti-colonial or nationalist (and therefore political and probably even socialist or communist) movements.⁴⁵

In this paradox the two leading organizations within the ICFTU both established close alliances with their own government despite the contrast between their respective views on colonialism. While they were partially united in their rejection of political unionism, they had some differences on this subject as well.

The situation often inspired mistrust among trade union leaders in the Third World. The AFL-CIO and the TUC were often regarded as the mouthpieces of great potentates and were therefore considered unreliable. Such suspicion obviously tainted the reputation of the ICFTU, which had long had difficulty establishing a base in the low- and middle-income countries.

Today, things are somewhat different: support is growing along the periphery and the semi-periphery, especially in Asia. Nonetheless, the

Table 10.2 ICFTU affiliation fees by region, 1960–98 (percentages)

	1960	1975	1998
Africa	1.4	1.6	1.4
Asia and Pacific	4.3	11.8	15.6
Europe	57.1	81.3	58.6
Latin America and Caribbean	0.4	1	0.4
North America	36.9	4.3	23.6
Total	100.1	100	99.6

Note: The Middle East is included in Asia.

Source: ICFTU.

organization remains financially dependent on the trade union movement in Europe and North America (see Table 10.2).

Christian and Communist Competitors

The fact that the ICFTU and its predecessor, the IFTU, were long considered extensions of the capitalist core countries helped other trade union internationals gain ground in the periphery.

The communist influence in the so-called Third World was considerable for a few decades. While the overwhelming majority of the support for the WFTU consisted of members of state-controlled trade unions in 'socialist' countries such as the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China and of trade unions in Southern Europe, the organization also comprised influential member organizations for a while in countries such as India, Indonesia, Ceylon and French Africa.⁴⁶

The International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), established in 1920 and focused entirely on Europe until the Second World War, was forced to extend its operations outside Europe after 1945, partly because several of its former member organizations had disbanded or merged into trade unions encompassing all ideologies (as, for example, in Germany and Austria). The IFCTU set up a reasonably successful regional organization in Latin America (1954) and recruited support in Vietnam and Africa as well.⁴⁷

Relations between the ICFTU and the WFTU remained very tense,⁴⁸ although they were more cordial with the IFCTU. Since the 1960s, however, the situation has changed completely. The crisis in international communism has affected the WFTU as well. Successive sources of disagreement within the communist movement, such as the repression of the Prague Spring in 1968, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the rise of Solidarność in Poland in 1980–81, and, of course, the subsequent fall of the 'actual existing socialism' in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union eroded the organization. In Western Europe the most prominent WFTU members (the CGT in France and the CGIL in Italy) clearly grew closer to the non-communist trade union confederations.

The ICFTU was forced by its geographical expansion to reflect on its identity. According to Patrick Pasture:

In large areas of the world, such as Africa and Asia, there were only limited possibilities for expansion for an explicitly and exclusively Christian trade union movement, although in these countries there was an outspoken interest in a trade union movement inspired by spiritual values. . . . Moreover the worldwide expansion of the IFCTU was taking place within a climate of fierce competition with the ICFTU, which was suspected of wanting to push the IFCTU back inside Europe, and in time to finish it off altogether.⁴⁹

At the sixteenth IFCTU Congress (Luxembourg, 1968) the word 'Christian' was definitively deleted from the organization's name; henceforth the IFCTU was known as the World Confederation of Labour (WCL). In addition, a new declaration of principles was adopted which merely stated that the WCL's principles, objectives and methods of action were 'consistent with either a spiritual concept based on the conviction that man and the universe are created by God, or other concepts that lead together with it to a common effort to build a human community united in freedom, dignity, justice and brotherhood'.⁵⁰

The *rapprochement* between the main movements in trade union internationalism enabled new regional structures, the most obvious example being the establishment of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) by the ICFTU affiliates in 1973. The word 'Free' was noticeably absent from the new organization's name and conveyed a willingness to work with other unions.⁵¹ In 1974 eight WCL affiliates joined. They were followed by the Italian communist CGIL the next year and by the French communist CGT in 1999. The ETUC now comprises all major trade union confederations in Western Europe.

Looking Ahead

All told, the world trade union movement appears to have tremendous potential. I attribute this to three factors. First, the total number of wage-earners in the world is likely to continue to increase in the decades ahead, certainly in absolute and probably also in relative terms (that is, as a percentage of the world population). Second, the international trade union movement is now less divided than ever before. Third, the 'third wave of democratization' of the 1980s and 1990s has afforded trade unions greater leeway, at any rate in the near future.⁵²

The international trade union movement's ability to take advantage of this opportunity for further growth depends heavily on the way in which it handles several challenges. In the century ahead the working class will probably be located increasingly outside the high-income countries, so overcoming Eurocentrism is essential. Jelle Visser has noted four major differences between the European Union and the rest of the world. First, union density (one-third of all wage-earners) is higher than in other world regions.⁵³ Second, sectoral

collective bargaining with collective employers' organizations still exists in Europe, whereas nearly everywhere else some form of enterprise unionism dominates along with the corresponding enterprise collective bargaining. Third, most European countries have some kind of institutionalized collaboration between states, employers and trade unions, whereas in other countries the system has either disappeared or has never existed. And, fourth, European industrial relations have a stronger transnational base than those in other regions, including the area of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Canada, Mexico and the United States) – the unique ETUC is a case in point.⁵⁴ This situation calls for a new conceptualization of trade union duties that is applicable both within and outside Europe without imposing one region's standards on another region. Obviously, such an open approach should coincide with an effort to implement international labour standards universally.

This strategy leads me to the second challenge: globally, workers in the public sector and in the large industrial and commercial firms constitute a relatively small minority of the labour force. The majority works in rural areas or in what is known as the informal sector. Traditionally, the international trade union movement has taken little interest in this majority. If the movement aims to acquire true influence in the low- and middle-income countries, it will need to devise new strategies for these sectors. These new strategies might in turn benefit the high-income countries, where there is also an increasing number of grey zones of (ostensible) self-employment, in which individuals formally work on their own but in reality are dependent on one or two customers. The ICFTU is keenly aware of this issue, as became apparent during the world congress in Melbourne (1988).⁵⁵ With agricultural sharecroppers, self-employed workers and the like, however, the dividing line between wage labour and small entrepreneurship is fairly obscure. Organizing these people will therefore require non-traditional trade union models.

Third, labour relationships in the more traditional trade union settings (the public sector and industrial and commercial firms) will almost certainly undergo major changes. Giovanni Arrighi has noted that governmental and business structures became highly bureaucratized and formalized during the twentieth century and that this trend has led to bureaucratization in labour movements as well. In his view, the new organizational forms of firms and state apparatuses might bring about the conditions for 'the revival in entirely new forms of the more flexible and informal organizational structures typical of the labour movement of the nineteenth century'.⁵⁶

Because of all these changes, the world trade union movement in the twenty-first century will have a somewhat different constituency than in the twentieth century. In previous decades white male workers in the West dominated the movement; the increasing economic importance of new industrializing countries and the 'flexibilization' and 'informalization' of labour relationships, however, will probably considerably expand the influence of women and people of colour in the global labour movement. In addition, the intensification of global connections, in part because of the ongoing growth of transnational

companies and the rise of the Internet, will add an entirely new meaning to workers' internationalism.

All told, the international trade union movement faces immense tasks. To perform these duties, powerful organizational growth is an absolute condition. ICFTU and WCL now have an approximate combined total membership of 150 million.⁵⁷ While this number seems large, it is in fact modest in that it accounts for only about 5 to 10 per cent of the world labour force. Much has been accomplished, but far more lies ahead.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Chapter 2 in this volume.
- 2 See the reconstruction in Simon, Hartmut (1993), *Die Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen internationaler Gewerkschaftsarbeit vor dem ersten Weltkrieg*, Essen: Klartext Verlag, chs 1–3.
- 3 Quoted in Harrod, Jeffrey (1972), *Trade Union Foreign Policy. A Study of British and American Union Activities in Jamaica*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, pp. 329–30.
- 4 Gallin, Dan (1973), 'Counter-Strategies of the Employees', in Kurt P. Tudyka (ed.), *Multinational Corporations and Labour Unions*, Nijmegen: SUN, pp. 31–38 at p. 36.
- 5 Olle, Werner and Schoeller, Wolfgang (1987), 'World Market Competition and Restrictions upon International Trade Union Policies', in Rosalind E. Boyd, Robin Cohen and Peter C.W. Gutkind (eds), *International Labour and the Third World*, Aldershot: Avebury, pp. 26–47; Tudyka, Kurt P. (1986), 'Die Weltkonzernräte in der Krise', *WSI-Mitteilungen*, 39, pp. 324–29.
- 6 Thus far, the ILO has published over 170 Conventions. The key Conventions are those against forced labour (1930, 1957); on the freedom of association and collective bargaining (1948, 1949); equal remuneration and discrimination (1951, 1958); and the minimum age (1973).
- 7 The tripartite character reflects the ILO's origins. The organization was 'the response of the victorious powers to the menace of Bolshevism. By creating the ILO, they offered organized labour participation in social and industrial reform within an accepted framework of capitalism.' Cox, Robert W. (1977), 'Labor and Hegemony', *International Organization*, 31, pp. 385–424 at p. 387.
- 8 Lorwin, Lewis L. (1929), *Labor and Internationalism*, New York: Macmillan, p. 98.
- 9 On the syndicalist IWMA see Thorpe, Wayne (1989), *The Workers Themselves'. Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913–1923*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers; idem (1990), 'Syndicalist Internationalism before World War II', in Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds), *Revolutionary Syndicalism. An International Perspective*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, pp. 237–60. The most important study of the Profintern (Red International of Trade Unions) has not yet been published: see Tosstorff, Reiner (1999) '"Moskau oder Amsterdam". Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale 1921–1937', unpublished Habilitationsschrift, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz. But see also Migliardi, Giorgio (1967), 'L'Internazionale dei sindacati rossi Profintern', *Annali Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, 9, pp. 325–47; Resis, Albert (1967), 'The Profintern. Origins to 1923', unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University, New York; Dreyfus, Michel (1996), '1924–1927: un moment privilégié de l'histoire de l'Internationale syndicale rouge', in Mikhail Narinsky and Jürgen Rojahn (eds), *Centre and Periphery. The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents*, Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, pp. 89–101.
- 10 The American political scientist John Logue has identified another motive for symbolic internationalism: self-interest among trade-union leaders. 'Elite activities

that do not advance members' interests will be undertaken when they advance the interest of trade union leaders *provided* that the costs to the members are not high enough to lead to disturbances in the leaders' conduct of trade union affairs.'

Logue illustrates his point by describing the American CIO's international policy at the end of the Second World War, which contributed to the founding of the World Federation of Trade Unions. This policy 'was motivated in part by the desire of the CIO central leadership to establish its equality *on a national basis* with the AFL. Establishing international equality was a step toward establishing national equality. It also had the virtue of placating the CIO's left wing; it was a cheap price for the right wing in the CIO to pay for coexistence with the Communist leaders of some of the CIO unions.'

In addition, Logue notes the emergence of international experts in the trade union bureaucracies. This trend has given rise to 'a very small group of individuals with a vested interest in the expansion of international contacts. The international expert enjoys conference travel, an interesting life, and some sense of importance.' Logue, John (1980), *Toward a Theory of Trade Union Internationalism*, Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, pp. 27–28.

- 11 Cox, Robert W. (1980), 'Labor and Hegemony. A Reply', *International Organization*, 34, pp. 159–76 at p. 163.
- 12 John Logue bases his highly original theory of trade union internationalism on two postulates: (i) 'Provided trade unions are democratic, autonomous organizations, they will pursue the short-term economic interest of their members'; and (ii) 'the greater the degree of trade union control over its national environment, the less likely it is to undertake international activity to achieve its members' goals.' Logue, *Toward a Theory of Trade Union Internationalism*, pp. 10–11. These postulates apply only in moderate periods, not in times of resurgent radicalism.
- 13 Kulemann, Wilhelm (1898), 'Die internationale Organisation der Buchdrucker', *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im deutschen Reich*, 22, pp. 374–409; Musson, A.E. (1954), *The Typographical Association*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 305–308; Chauvet, Paul (1956), *Les ouvriers du livre en France de 1789 à la constitution de la Fédération du Livre*, Paris: Rivière, pp. 632–34; idem (1971), *Les ouvriers du livre et du journal. La Fédération Française des Travailleurs du Livre*, Paris: Editions Ouvrières, p. 245.
- 14 See Herrmann, Karl Georg (1994), *Die Geschichte des Internationalen Bergarbeiterverbandes, 1890–1939*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, p. 19. Later this argument was watered down. Ibid., pp. 26–27.
- 15 Lorwin, *Labor and Internationalism*, p. 98.
- 16 Dreyfus, Michel (2000), 'The Emergence of an International Trade Union Organization (1902–1919)', in Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, Berne: Peter Lang Academic, pp. 25–71 (esp. Table 2). Also Lorwin, *Labor and Internationalism*, pp. 98–99.
- 17 Each country started by establishing national trade unions for individual occupations. Next, these trade unions formed cross-national alliances consisting of International Trade Secretariats on the one hand and national alliances of different trade unions in trade union centres on the other hand, which in turn paved the way toward an International Secretariat. Logically, therefore, the International Secretariat was established later than most ITSS.
- 18 Scoville, James G. (1973), 'Some Determinants of the Structure of Labor Movements', in Adolf Sturmthal and James G. Scoville (eds), *The International Labor Movement in Transition*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, pp. 58–78 at p. 74. A different version of this idea is expressed in Stinchcombe, Arthur (1965), 'Social Structure and Organizations', in James G. March (ed.), *Handbook of Organizations*, Chicago: Rand-McNally, pp. 142–93 at p. 154.
- 19 Fimmen, Edo (1924), *Labour's Alternative. The United States of Europe or Europe Limited*, trans. E. Paul and C. Paul, London: The Labour Publishing Company, p. 117. See also Van Goethem, Geert (2000), 'Conflicting Interests. The

- International Federation of Trade Unions (1919–1945)', in van der Linden, *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, pp. 73–163 at pp. 97, 116. Incidentally, institutional inertia has certain advantages. Historical research shows that the older organizations become, the better their chances of survival. See Stinchcombe, 'Social Structure and Organizations', pp. 148–50; Hannan, Michael and Freeman, John (1989), *Organizational Ecology*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 20 Gumbrell-McCormick, Rebecca (2000), 'Facing New Challenges. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (1972–1990s)', in van der Linden, *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, pp. 341–517.
 - 21 The role of the International Trade Secretariats was also a major issue upon the split of the WFTU in 1949: see Koch-Baumgarten, Sigrid and Rütters, Peter (1991), *Zwischen Integration und Autonomie. Der Konflikt zwischen Internationalen Berufssekretariaten und Weltgewerkschaftsbund um den Neuaufbau einer internationalen Gewerkschaftsorganisation (1945–1949). Eine Dokumentation*, Cologne: Bund Verlag.
 - 22 Steinbach, Arnold L. (1963), 'Changing Concepts and Practices in the International Labor Movement', in Everett M. Kassalow (ed.), *National Labor Movements in the Postwar World*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, pp. 34–50 at p. 40.
 - 23 'Manifesto', in *Official Report of the Free World Labour Conference and of the First Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, London, November–December, 1949*, pp. 242–46 at p. 242.
 - 24 Ibid.
 - 25 *Official Report*, p. 115.
 - 26 On this see Adler, Les K. and Paterson, Thomas G. (1970), 'Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s–1950s', *American Historical Review*, 74 (4), pp. 1046–64.
 - 27 'Manifesto', pp. 244–45.
 - 28 At the founding congress, CIO spokesman Walter Reuther stated: 'We do not believe that our choice in the world today is between Wall Street and the Kremlin. We do not believe that the choice is between Stalin and Standard Oil. We believe that the choice lies down the road, democratic middle, where people may fight to have both bread and freedom.' *Official Report*, p. 95. See also Carew, Anthony (2000), 'Towards a Free Trade Union Centre. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (1949–1972)', in van der Linden, *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, pp. 187–339 at pp. 195–99.
 - 29 ICFTU, report of the meeting of the General Council, 1–5 July 1952. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, ICFTU Archive, boxes 380–82.
 - 30 'Manifesto', p. 243.
 - 31 I am following the interpretation of: Mitschein, Thomas (1981), *Die Dritte Welt als Gegenstand gewerkschaftlicher Theorie und Praxis*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, pp. 108–29.
 - 32 'Preamble to Constitution', *Official Report*, p. 226.
 - 33 Sometimes they also appeared insincere. Regarding the emphasis of the British TUC in the 1950s on the non-political character of 'proper' trade unionism, Davies has correctly observed: 'Some of these sentiments sound odd in the context of the history of the British trade union movement, which had supported a general strike, maintained a close link with the Labour Party, and in its annual congresses regularly debated resolutions on a large number of issues outside the field of industrial relations.' Davies, D.I. (1964), 'The Politics of the TUC's Colonial Policy', *The Political Quarterly*, 35, pp. 23–34 at p. 26.
 - 34 Sturmthal, Adolf (1973), 'Industrial Relations Strategies', in Sturmthal and Scoville, *The International Labor Movement in Transition*, pp. 1–33 at p. 5.
 - 35 Ibid., p. 9.
 - 36 Ibid., p. 10.

- 37 The following paragraphs are based on Buschak, Willy (1985), 'Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund, Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale und die Gewerkschaftsbewegung in Kolonien und halbkolonialen Ländern', in *Gewerkschaftsbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert im Vergleich*, Bochum: Institut zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, pp. 34–55.
- 38 Purcell sympathized with the Soviet Union, considered European capitalism 'decadent' and believed that the newer capitalism in the 'outer regions of the world' was 'pushing ahead'. He considered it 'a failing of our International that we have been too much localised in Europe.' The IFTU had not 'fully grasped the fact that millions of coloured peoples (belonging to the so-called subject races) have become fully proletarianised in the most modern sense.' 'Presidential Address', *Report of Proceedings at the Fourth Ordinary Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions*, Amsterdam, 1927, pp. 24–34 at pp. 24–25. Léon Jouhaux, the French vice-president of the IFTU, replied that the president's speech had been made 'on his personal responsibility only'; and in the name of all other members of the executive board (except one), he declared: 'we do not accept the ideas which Purcell has expressed'. This declaration was received with 'prolonged cheers'. *Ibid.*, p. 35. It is, of course, quite possible that Jouhaux's comment was inspired more by anti-communism than by a lack of interest in colonial labour movements *per se*. See also Van Goethem, 'Conflicting Interests', pp. 105–106.
- 39 Communist interest in semi-colonial and colonial countries arose largely from the failure of political offensives in Europe. The Second Congress of the Communist International (1920) marked 'a key conjunction in the history of Marxism as a theory of socialist revolution, because from then on its main interpellation came to be in the periphery'. Post, Ken (1997), *Revolution's Other World: Communism and the Periphery, 1917–39*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 40.
- 40 Buschak, 'Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund', pp. 38–39.
- 41 Part of the socialist labour movement had tried to restrict immigration prior to the First World War as well. For an overview of these early discussions, see Claudie Weill's chapter on international migration in her (1987), *L'Internationale et l'Autre. Les relations inter-ethniques dans la IIe Internationale*, Paris: Arcantère, pp. 97–121. An effort to explain this attitude appears in Quinlan, Michael and Lever-Tracy, Constance (1990), 'From Labour Market Exclusion to Industrial Solidarity. Australian Trade Union Responses to Asian Workers, 1830–1988', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 14, pp. 159–81.
- 42 Buschak, 'Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund', pp. 38–39.
- 43 Davies, 'The Politics of the TUC's Colonial Policy', p. 24.
- 44 Weiler, Peter (1984), 'Forming Responsible Trade Unions. The Colonial Office, Colonial Labor, and the Trades Union Congress', *Radical History Review*, 28–30, pp. 367–92 at p. 384. See also Nicholson, Majorie (1986), *The TUC Overseas. The Roots of Policy*, London: Allen & Unwin.
- 45 See, for example, Radosh, Ronald (1964), *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy*, New York: Random House; Snow, Sinclair (1964), *The Pan-American Federation of Labor*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Spalding, Hobart A. jr. (1988), 'U.S. Labour Intervention in Latin America. The Case of the American Institute for Free Labor Development', in Roger Southall (ed.), *Trade Unions and the New Industrialization of the Third World*, London: Zed Books, pp. 259–86.
- 46 No serious history of the WFTU exists. For the French CGT's involvement in colonial Africa, see Dewitte, Philippe (1981), 'La CGT et les syndicats d'Afrique occidentale française (1945–1957)', *Le Mouvement social*, 117, October–December, pp. 3–32; Delanoue, Paul (1983), 'La CGT et les syndicats de l'Afrique noire de colonisation française, de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale aux indépendances', *Le Mouvement Social*, 122, January–March, pp. 103–16; Dewitte, Philippe (1983), 'Réponse à Paul Delanoue', *Le Mouvement Social*, 122, January–March, pp. 117–21.

- 47 Wahlers, Gerhard (1990), *CLAT. Geschichte einer lateinamerikanischen Gewerkschaftsinternationale*, Witterschlick/Bonn: Verlag M. Wehle, chs 2 and 3; Pasture, Patrick (1994), *Christian Trade Unionism in Europe Since 1968*, Aldershot: Avebury, pp. 85–87.
- 48 On this subject, see also Carew, 'Towards a Free Trade Union Centre'.
- 49 Pasture, *Christian Trade Unionism*, pp. 86–87. See also Pasture's thorough analysis in his (1999), *Histoire du syndicalisme chrétien international. La difficile recherche d'une troisième voie*, Paris: L'Harmattan, ch. VI.
- 50 'Declaration of Principles of the World Confederation of Labour Adopted by the 16th Congress at Luxembourg, 1–4 October, 1968', reprinted in Pasture, *Christian Trade Unionism*, pp. 165–74 at p. 165.
- 51 On this subject, see Niethammer, Lutz (1977), 'Defensive Integration. Der Weg zum EGB und die Perspektive einer europäischen Einheitsgewerkschaft', in Ulrich Borsdorf *et al.* (eds), *Gewerkschaftliche Politik. Reform aus Solidarität. Zum 60. Geburtstag von Heinz O. Vetter*, Cologne: Bund Verlag, pp. 567–96; Platzer, Hans-Wolfgang (1991), *Gewerkschaftspolitik ohne Grenzen? Die transnationale Zusammenarbeit der Gewerkschaften im Europa der 90er Jahre*, Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., esp. ch. 2.
- 52 For a right-wing view see Huntington, Samuel P. (1991), *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press; for a left-wing view see Markoff, John (1996), *Waves of Democracy. Social Movements and Political Change*, Newbury Park: Sage.
- 53 On this subject, see also Galenson, Walter (1994), *Trade Union Growth and Decline. An International Study*, New York: Praeger, ch. 1.
- 54 Visser, Jelle (1998), 'Learning to Play. The Europeanisation of Trade Unions', in Patrick Pasture and Johan Verberckmoes (eds), *Working-Class Internationalism and the Appeal of National Identity. Historical Debates and Current Perspectives on Western Europe*, Oxford and New York: Berg, pp. 231–57 at pp. 234–36.
- 55 The report, *The Challenge of Change*, which was discussed in Melbourne (1988), stated: 'Viewed from a global perspective one, if not the major, challenge facing trade unions is the organising of vast numbers of workers in rural areas and in the "informal" sectors in developing countries.' *The Challenge of Change*, Brussels, p. 86. See also the portrait of the Indian Self Employed Women's Association. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- 56 Arrighi, Giovanni (1995), *Workers of the World at Century's End*, Seattle: Center for Labor Studies, p. 13. Some interesting and controversial suggestions for this kind of new labour internationalism appear in Waterman, Peter (1998), *Globalization, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms*, London: Mansell, ch. 5.
- 57 De ICFTU comprises 124 million members; the WCL 26 million.



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Chapter 11

Doing Comparative Labour History: Some Preliminaries¹

Introduction

For a century and a half, conservative politicians, social reformers and labour militants have been studying workers' movements in other countries, either to stave off the danger of 'social unrest' or to promote social change.² After a time, attempts were made to compare different national labour movements with one another, implicitly or explicitly. One of the best-known of these is Werner Sombart's short book, *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?*, which was published in 1906. Sombart's study was inspired by the considerable difference in popularity of the social democratic parties in Germany and the USA.³ However, for a long time such studies remained the exception.⁴

Since the 1970s the number of contributions to comparative labour history has increased by leaps and bounds, perhaps influenced by the globalization of the world economy. Remarkably, although a mountain of substantive research has been and is still being carried out, the methodological reflection that ought to parallel such research has been less evident.⁵ As a result, many so-called comparative studies are either not really comparative at all or they contain no clearly presented question, no specific hypotheses or only vague conclusions.

It is only very recently that labour historians have tentatively begun to be aware of the methodological aspects of their comparative efforts.⁶ This chapter aims to contribute to this self-reflection. In its course I shall build, on the one hand, on the experience gained and on the debate conducted at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, which has carried out all kinds of projects in the field of comparative labour history since the second half of the 1980s. On the other hand, I want to investigate what insights social scientists (especially anthropologists, political scientists and sociologists) have to offer us, for they have an older and more intensive tradition of cross-national research. In doing so I shall try to guard against the pseudo-refinement evident in much methodological writing and which for 'practising' scholars is often unworkable. As Adam Przeworski has rightly noted, 'Methodologists are at times listened to, always acclaimed, but rarely followed. Their canons are often impossible to observe and their advice often turns out to be impractical.'⁷

Principles

A comparison always relates to at least two items – two instances. We always compare one thing with another. All sorts of implications follow from this simple observation.

First, a comparison is preceded by a stage in which the researcher needs to know a number of things about the instances to be compared before he or she can begin to make a comparison. In order to make a comparison, phenomenal knowledge of the separate instances is required. Such knowledge consists of observations such as the following:

- 'The earliest working-class organizations in Australia were friendly societies and trade unions in the 1830s.'⁸
- '[1897] saw the beginnings of the modern Japanese trade-union movement with the establishment of a union for metalworkers.'⁹

It is not until descriptions of this sort are assembled that it is possible to compare and to observe, for example, that the Australian unions were established some 60 years earlier than the Japanese.

This brings me to the second point: the issue of comparability. In saying that two instances are 'comparable' we can mean two things. Sometimes comparable means similar, and in that sense we can say that the Industrial Workers of the World in Australia and New Zealand were comparable, but that the American AFL and the French CGT prior to 1914 were not. However, stating that two items are comparable can also mean that it is possible to establish that there are mutual differences and similarities, in which case the American AFL and the French CGT before 1914 *are* comparable.¹⁰ When I talk subsequently about comparability, I am using the term in this second sense.

And in this sense one could argue that everything can be compared with everything else, since all that is necessary in this regard is that 'the things compared be capable of possessing the same attributes'.¹¹ The question therefore is never 'Are two items comparable?', but '*In which respects* are they comparable?'. And that question is related to the question of whether it is meaningful to compare attributes. The meaningfulness of a comparison depends on the problem the researcher wants to solve. In some cases, it can be useful to compare trade unions with semi-conductor manufacturing firms and newspaper firms (as the American sociologists Michael Hannan and John Freeman have done), while in other cases it would be nonsensical to do so.¹²

Third, initially, the attribute of the two or more instances we wish to compare is usually a concept – 'workers' radicalism' or 'trade-union strength' for example. To compare such an attribute in different instances it is first necessary to translate the concept into the language or languages of the other countries in which it is to be studied. The Philippine *welga* is not exactly the same as the Australian *strike*. A standard procedure for checking translations involves someone translating the term concerned from the one language into the other and someone else translating it back. If the result of the back

translation differs from the original term, the researcher knows something is wrong, either with the translation or the back translation. Another variant sometimes used involves a term being translated by two people independent of one another. If their translations differ, it is again clear that there are problems.¹³

Often a concept has no direct equivalent in another language. In this case one cannot avoid defining the concept using more words and perhaps clarifying it using examples. But, even then, certain nuances might be lost.¹⁴

Fourth, once translations have been found for the concept, it is operationalized: the concept is converted into one or more directly perceptible variables. The difficulty here is that sometimes the same concept has to be operationalized differently according to the context. Suppose we wanted to compare economic growth in Australia and Indonesia in the period 1965 to 1985 in order to correlate that with strike behaviour. An obvious way of operationalizing the concept 'economic growth' would be to use the annual change in per capita gross national product. But in Australia such a measure means something different from that in Indonesia because non-market bound activities are excluded from the measures, for example.¹⁵ Per capita GNP would thus give a distorted picture of economic growth in both countries. The construction of cross-nationally valid measures is one of the chief problems in comparative research.¹⁶

If we apply a measure to different instances without taking into account their differences, we are using a *phenomenally identical* instrument. If, on the other hand, we operationalize a concept differently depending on its context, we speak of *conceptual equivalence*. The critical consideration is 'not the phenomenal identity of the indicators and the indexes, but rather the extent to which the indicators ... index the concept under investigation'.¹⁷

Fifth, for a sound comparison the instances compared must be of the same level. The comparison of some units is meaningful in answering a question and the comparison of other units is not. In general, it will be meaningless to compare, for example, an urban working-class district with a national working class. Each level has its own characteristics and the explanations accounting for occurrences on one level are inadequate to explain occurrences on a different level, even if these levels are linked to one another.¹⁸

A sixth and final general point deserving attention is the issue of contamination, which is also referred to in the literature as 'Galton's problem' because, in 1889, the statistician Francis Galton was the first to identify it. One talks of contamination when one process has caused similar changes in different instances. Suppose we wanted to account for why, both in Canada and Australia, the working-class mutual aid societies observed freemason-like rituals; we could do so only if we were aware that there was a process of historical diffusion, from Britain to the settler colonies. The so-called 'error of contamination' occurs when one is unaware of such a diffusion process and Australia and Canada are regarded as independent units, for example. As Stanley Lieberman has rightly remarked, 'We would not think much of a biological experiment where laboratory animals injected with some disease-causing virus were compared with control animals placed close enough to catch

the disease through contagion. Yet, in point of fact, that is precisely the problem in many social research studies.¹⁹

If the problem of contamination is not recognized, 'instance-stretching' results: more instances are presented in which a certain phenomenon occurs than is really the case. This is less of a risk with small samples (with which the researcher is more familiar) than with statistical comparisons. Finding a workable solution to the contamination problem for this latter type of research is not easy.²⁰ Where samples are small, carefully selected studies of instances may provide a solution because Galton's problem 'can be interpreted as an instance of a spurious relationship, which can be handled without difficulty if the source of the diffusion is known or suspected'.²¹ Of considerable importance is the historical reconstruction of diffusion patterns, which often follow trade routes.²²

Comparisons

A historian may have various reasons for comparing instances, and there are therefore different types of comparison as well. Although there is no consensus concerning their classification,²³ we can nonetheless distinguish three logical levels: contrasting, testing and incorporating comparisons.

- 1 *Contrasting comparisons* highlight similarities and differences between two or more instances. Researchers remain at the level of the observations but, on the basis of these, they can nevertheless attempt to draw up a classification, typology or taxonomy of the instances²⁴ and put forward hypotheses to explain possible causal relationships. Most comparative labour historians are involved in making contrasting comparisons.²⁵ Following James Jasper we could describe these sorts of effort as ideographic comparisons.²⁶ An example can be found in the work of the German historian Hans Mommsen, who distinguished two types of labour movement in the world (the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental-European types) and postulated hypotheses for the existence of this bifurcation.²⁷ Some believe that herein lies the most important function of comparisons. Hugh Stretton, for example, writes that '[c]omparison is strongest as a choosing and provoking, not a proving device: a system for questioning, not for answering'.²⁸
- 2 *Testing comparisons* aim to test hypotheses, typologies and the like; 'they control (verify or falsify) whether generalizations hold across the cases to which they apply'.²⁹ An example is provided by Stefan Berger's recent study in which Mommsen's typology is rebutted by a systematic comparison between the British Labour Party and the German SPD in the period 1900 to 1931 and in which a new typology is then proposed according to which there is 'a European labour movement including both the Labour Party and the SPD' which contrasts with 'altogether different non-European labour movements, like the American labour movement'.³⁰

- 3 *Incorporating comparisons* use the hypotheses tested as the basis of a causal narrative that tries to expose the relationship between developments in different countries or regions. They seem to strongly resemble what Marc Bloch termed ‘historical comparisons’: ‘[t]his is to make a parallel study of societies that are at once neighbouring and contemporary, exercising a constant mutual influence, exposed throughout their development to the action of the same broad causes just because they are close and contemporaneous, and owing their existence in part at least to a common origin.’³¹ These sorts of reconstruction have twin advantages: ‘directly taking account of the interconnectedness of ostensibly separate experiences and providing a strong incentive to ground analyses explicitly in the historical contexts of the structures and processes they include.’³² The theory behind such reconstructions is not yet very highly developed³³ and few attempts have been made to apply the theory in practice. However, one example that touches on the field of labour history is the work of Stein Rokkan who has tried to show that any explanation for the structures of various European party systems requires considering the tremendous societal conflicts that have occurred since the sixteenth century – that is, their beginning, their ‘solution’ and their overall timing.³⁴ On the basis of such principles Rokkan has, for example, reconstructed the differential impact of the Russian Revolution on European working-class organizations.³⁵

These different sorts of comparison form a series of logical stages. For the sake of convenience I have summarized the discussion in Figure 11.1.

There are no hard and fast rules for contrasting comparisons, and particularly for devising causal hypotheses. Hans Reichenbach has rightly noted, for instance, that ‘[t]he scientist who discovers [!] a theory is usually guided to his discovery by guesses; he cannot name a method by means of

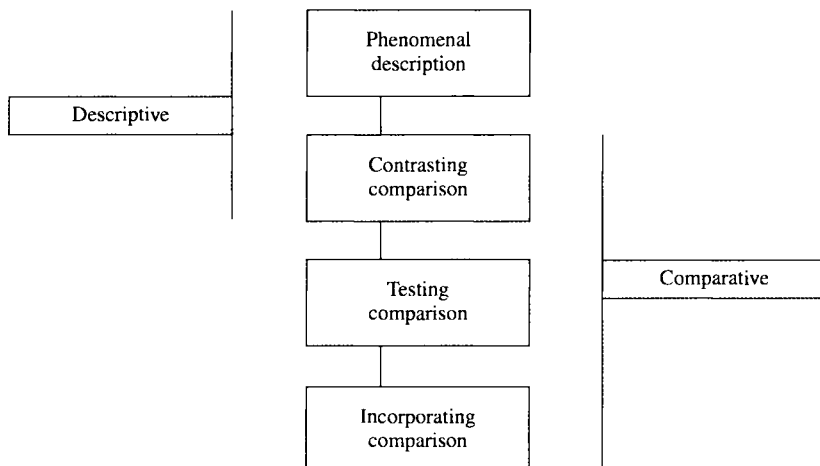


Figure 11.1 Levels of comparison

which he found the theory and can only say that it appeared plausible to him, that he had the right hunch, or that he saw intuitively which assumption would fit the facts'.³⁶

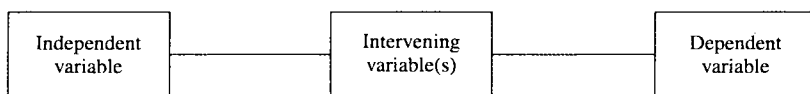
I therefore now want to go on to consider testing comparisons in particular – that is, how comparisons can be used to *control* generalizations. This is the step most comparative labour historians have not yet been prepared to take. But such comparisons are indispensable to obtaining insight into relations and thus in enabling incorporating comparisons in the long term.

Configurations

Once the concepts and their operationalizations have been decided on and a hypothesis put forward to explain their mutual relationship (the so-called causal configuration), one can begin with the testing comparison. The causal configuration indicates the supposed relationship between an outcome (a historical result or 'dependent variable') and one or more underlying factors (causes or 'independent variables'). Such a causal configuration can take all sorts of form. Here, I distinguish between four types of causal configuration, and discuss them in order of increasing complexity:

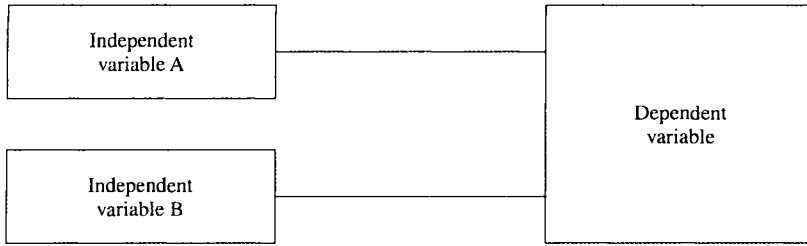
Monocausality

There is a direct and unique relationship between the dependent variable and one independent variable. Occasionally one comes across such monocausal configurations in historical sociology. Take, for example, Richard Löwenthal's hypothesis about the absence of proletarian revolutions in industrialized societies. Löwenthal argues that in modern complex societies, in contrast to agrarian societies, the large majority of the population (and thus of the working class too) has become so dependent on the state for all sorts of social and infrastructural provision that the result is an objectively founded fear of the collapse of that state.³⁷ In the causal configuration outlined by Löwenthal there is, in addition to the dependent variable (missing revolutions in industrial societies), just one independent variable: the dependence of the population (including the workers) of the state in industrial societies. Of course, there might be several logical links (intervening variables) between the dependent and the independent variables, but that does not change anything in the overall structure:



Multiple Causality

Several singular causes can each separately produce the same outcome.



Thus workers can decide to join a strike because of an anticipated wage increase, peer-group pressure, or for political reasons.³⁸ There is a debate over whether such multiple causality really exists. Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel have suggested that '[w]hen a plurality of causes is asserted for an effect, the *effect* is not analyzed very carefully'.³⁹ We can, for example, say that all sorts of causes ('an overturned kerosene lamp', 'defective electric wiring', 'a faulty chimney') can lead to a fire, but that is not correct:

Instances which have significant differences are taken to illustrate the *same effect*. These differences escape the untrained eye, although they are noted by the expert. Thus the way in which a house burns down when an overturned lamp is the cause, is not the same as when defective wiring is the cause. The doctrine of plurality of causes is plausible only if we analyse the causes into a larger number of distinct types than we do the effect. The doctrine overlooks many differentiating factors present in several instances of a so-called effect, and by viewing these instances under their more generic features regards them as instances of the *same effect*. For many purposes it is perhaps convenient to retain this lack of symmetry in the analysis of causes and effects. But it does not follow from this fact of convenience that the usual illustrations of plurality of causes really prove the absence of a one-to-one correspondence between cause and effect.⁴⁰

Despite its *prima facie* plausibility, this consideration cannot carry too much weight in historical research because a far-reaching differentiation of the dependent variable is either impossible or impractical.⁴¹

Syndromatic Causality

Multiple causes in conjunction produce the phenomenon being studied:

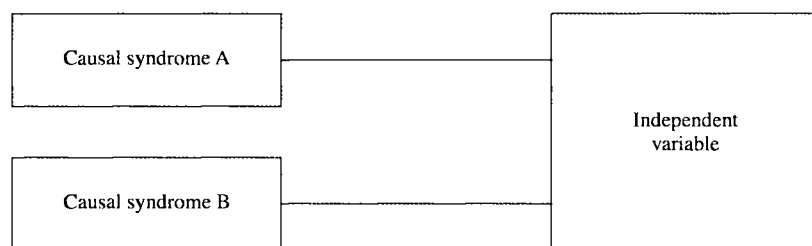
It is often argued that social events occur in syndromes that have a specific spatiotemporal location; in other words, societies constitute 'systems', and therefore various elements of societies interact with each other. Comparisons that disregard syndromes or interaction are based on an assumption that the phenomena to which the same name has been applied are in some way 'the same.' This assumption will usually be false.⁴²



An example is the national integration of working classes, which seems to have been promoted by a complex range of factors: the timing and profitability of capital accumulation; a nation's international prestige; the coming of interregional connections; and the extent of compulsory education, suffrage, conscription and social security provisions. All these influences are inter-dependent.⁴³

Multiple Syndromatic Causality

Multiple combinations of causes can each separately lead to the phenomenon being studied. This, Charles Ragin claims, seems to be the usual case: typically, there are several combinations of conditions that may produce the same emergent phenomenon or the same change.⁴⁴



One example of this is the social basis of Spanish anarchism in the 1920s and 1930s, to which there were, in fact, two social backgrounds: latifundism in southern Andalusia and modern industry in northern Catalonia.

Of course, no one can know what causal configuration we are dealing with in historical reality. If we propose a monocausal hypothesis, we shall therefore have to bear in mind that relations can be more complex in practice.

Samples

Once a hypothesis concerning the causal configuration has been formulated, a sample of instances has to be selected. The sample has two important characteristics which we have to bear in mind in the research design: size and composition.

Size

As we shall see, the question of how many instances we wish to study (the sample size) largely determines the choice of research method. The number of possible comparisons increases geometrically with the number of instances studied. If I study two instances I make one comparison.⁴⁵ With three instances, three comparisons are possible. With six instances, the number of

possible comparisons rises to 15. The general formula for this is:

$$\text{Number of possible comparisons} = \frac{N \times (N - 1)}{2}$$

where N is the number of instances studied.

Small sample sizes have the advantage of enabling a greater level of detail to be achieved. For instance, according to Charles Tilly:

On the whole, comparative studies of big structures and large processes yield more intellectual return when investigators examine a relatively small number of instances. This is not because of the intrinsically greater value of small numbers but because large numbers give an illusory sense of security. With small numbers, the student of a structure or process has little choice but to pay attention to the historical circumstances and particular characteristics of the cases at hand and thus to work harder at meeting the commonsense conditions of effective comparison.⁴⁶

The disadvantages of small samples are principally that overdetermination can easily occur (I shall return to this point later) and that measurement error has a greater impact.⁴⁷ In general, labour historians compare two or three instances, sometimes a few more. Comparisons involving ten or more instances have so far been rare.⁴⁸

Composition

The composition of the sample is clearly important for the research design. Which countries, industries, cities and so on do we compare? The selection of instances can be influenced by all sorts of factors:⁴⁹

- *Familiarity with instances.* It is precisely with small samples that it is important for the researcher to be aware of the details. Historians wanting to conduct comparative research will therefore most probably select instances whose history they are very familiar with.
- *Availability of data.* In so far as a historian wants to use secondary sources, it is clearly important that such sources exist. If the history of a particular working-class or labour movement has scarcely yet been studied, it is tempting not to include this instance in the sample. In practice, this often leads to former communist countries or so-called Third-World countries being excluded and to an emphasis on the OECD countries.
- *Language.* If a historian's only language is English, he or she will prefer to select Anglo-Saxon countries or other former colonies of the British Empire. More specifically, labour history shows a marked preference for comparisons between the USA and Britain.
- *Country size.* Labour historians often employ an implicit selection criterion: the countries being compared have to be 'large'. So even if the researcher has languages other than English, the countries most likely to be included in the samples are France, Germany, Russia, Italy (and, of

course, the USA and Britain). Denmark, Portugal, for example, are rarely included in samples.⁵⁰ Sweden and the Netherlands are exceptions; they appear in samples rather often because their highly developed welfare states make them special cases.

In addition to such practical considerations, two methodological criteria play a role:

- *Similarity of instances along one or more dimensions.* Many comparisons focus on instances with common characteristics – for example, Western industrial nations, geocultural region, and so on. As a result, some variables can potentially be held constant, which simplifies the comparison and makes the interpretation of results easier.⁵¹
- *Heterogeneity of instances.* The more diverse the instances, the wider the range of historical experiences being studied and the more causal factors uncovered (provided that these instances are still ‘comparable’ – that is, are still members of the same theoretical population and thus ‘capable of possessing the same attributes’).

Methods

Different Types of Comparative Methods

The method used to test a hypothesis comparatively depends mainly on the number of instances and variables. Figure 11.2 summarizes the main possibilities.⁵² The number of instances is indicated horizontally and the number of variables vertically. The ‘all’ instances column and the ‘all’ variables row are included here, although it is not always clear what this means. In particular, we should bear in mind Stefan Nowak’s caveat:

In any investigation we are unable to grasp all of the connections and relationships. Always we are able to study some, while omitting others. It is better if the decisions

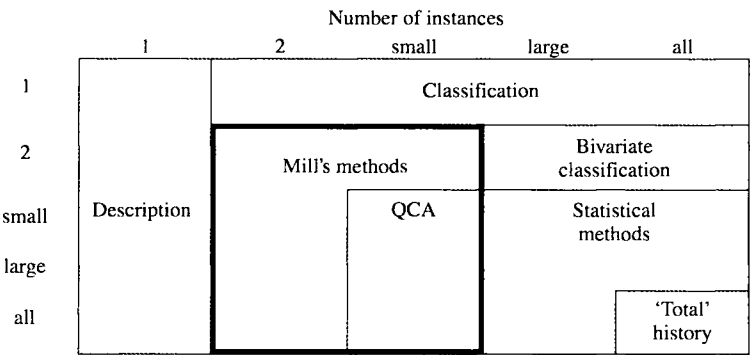


Figure 11.2 The application of comparative methods

we take in this matter are made in the full awareness of the fact, and worse if, having grasped only some relationships, we believe that we have examined them all.⁵³

Most elements in this scheme will probably be fairly self-explanatory.

- If I compare a number of instances on the basis of one variable, I am arranging them, classifying them.
- If I summarize, for a specific instance, the various variables that seem important to me (and their supposed mutual relations), I am describing it.⁵⁴
- If I compare a number of instances (two or a few more) on the basis of two or more variables, Mill-type methods may be appropriate. I shall return to this point a little later.
- If I examine a small sample of instances on the basis of more than a couple of variables, I can apply the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA).⁵⁵
- If the number of instances becomes large or even complete and I am concerned with only two variables, I can apply a bivariate classification.
- If the number of instances becomes large or even complete and I am concerned with more than two variables, I can apply statistical methods (or QCA, as we will see).

In the rest of this chapter I shall restrict myself to non-statistical comparative methods – methods used to examine roughly two to thirty instances. The principal measure in statistical comparisons is the mean; deviations are merely ‘outliers’ that disturb the pattern we are looking for. By contrast, in non-statistical comparisons each instance counts equally and there are no ‘outliers’. Such comparisons are also termed ‘qualitative’. These are the absolute favourite in comparative labour history (but not in industrial relations and economic history).

Method I

The oldest method used to compare a small number of instances was described by John Stuart Mill in his *A System of Logic* (1843). In recent years, this method, which Mill claimed to be especially useful in scientific research, has also become popular again within the social sciences as a result of Theda Skocpol’s powerful advocacy.⁵⁶

Mill assumes that outcomes have single causes (monocausality). He makes a distinction between the Method of Agreement and the Method of Difference.⁵⁷ If we want to explain a phenomenon using the Method of Agreement, we have to examine two or more positive instances (that is, instances in which the phenomenon we wish to explain occurs) and trace the antecedents of that phenomenon. If, in every positive instance, certain phenomena other than the phenomenon itself also occur, we may have found a causal connection (see Figure 11.3).

Instance 1	Instance 2	Instance N	
X_1	X_4	X_7	Differences
X_2	X_5	X_8	
X_3	X_6	X_9	
X_n	X_n	X_n	Similarity
Y	Y	Y	

Figure 11.3 Method of Agreement

This method can never give a decisive answer about the cause of the phenomenon being examined, for two reasons.

- 1 It is conceivable that X_n occurs *coincidentally* whenever Y occurs and that X_n and Y are not in fact related.
- 2 It is conceivable that *both* X_n and Y are caused by a hidden variable Z.

So the usefulness of the Method of Agreement depends a great deal on the quality of our analysis of the antecedents of the phenomenon being examined. Whether we believe that X_n really causes Y depends to a considerable extent on whether all the relevant factors have been considered, and to what extent we believe the links between the different factors are convincing. In other words, the Method of Agreement is not a 'recipe' that can be applied mechanically to discover the cause of a phenomenon; on the contrary, the efficacy of this method largely depends on the usefulness of the theoretical approach to the historical reality (and to decide which 'factors' are relevant and may be causally related).

If we want to explain a phenomenon using the Method of Difference, we need to look closely at both the instances in which it occurs and those in which it does not. In doing so we try to identify instances that resemble one another as much as possible – except, that is, in relation to the occurrence of the phenomenon being studied. Ideally, we would compare a positive and a negative instance that are otherwise identical (see Figure 11.4).

Positive Instances	Negative Instances	
X_1	X_1	Similarities
X_2	X_2	
X_3	X_3	
X_n	Non X_n	Difference
Y	Non Y	

Figure 11.4 Method of Difference

But this, too, is no guarantee that X_n causes Y . As with the Method of Agreement, it is still conceivable that X_n is coincidentally missing when Y is missing and occurs coincidentally when Y occurs, or that X_n and Y are caused by a third factor Z that has not been considered.

It is also possible to combine the Method of Agreement with the Method of Difference. This is what Mill called the Joint Method or the Indirect Method of Difference (Figure 11.5).

Positive Instances		Negative Instances	
X_1	X_1	Non X_1	Non X_1
X_2	X_4	X_6	X_8
X_3	X_5	X_7	X_9
Y	Y	Non Y	Non Y

Figure 11.5 Joint Method

Obviously, this method does not resolve the essential problem either: we cannot trace the cause or causes of a phenomenon using a mechanical or technical trick because the connection between X_1 and Y may again be spurious.⁵⁸ We must therefore conclude that Mill's methods of comparison can never identify a definitive causal connection.⁵⁹ As Mill noted, this objection is more serious in the social than the physical sciences because of the recurrence of syndromatic causality. In a too seldom read chapter of his *Logic* Mill pointed out that particularly in 'the phenomena of politics and history Plurality of Causes exists in almost boundless excess, and effects are, for the most part, inextricably interwoven with one another'.⁶⁰

However, this does not imply that this method of comparison is not meaningful. The strength of the Method of Agreement, the Method of Difference and the Joint Method is that conceivable explanations can be *eliminated*. No element that does not always occur when Y occurs can possibly be the cause or at least the sole cause of X . And no element that occurs in both positive (Y) and negative instances (non Y) can be the cause or at least the sole cause of Y .

Method II

In 1970 the sociologists Adam Przeworski and Henri Teune presented an elaboration of Mill's methods. Their model differs mainly from Mill's because they use a greater number of variables. Somewhat modified, their Most Similar Systems Design is depicted in Figure 11.6. In this design the similar traits (X_1, \dots, X_k) are of no causal importance in explaining Y because they are constant while Y varies. In contrast, the traits that vary with Y (X_{k+1}, \dots, X_{k+n}) form competing hypotheses.

The Most Different Systems Design is depicted in Figure 11.7. Here one is searching for as many different instances as possible in which Y still occurs.

Instances	Similar Traits (Controlled variables)	Different Traits (Operant variables)	Dependent Variable
	X_1, \dots, X_k	X_{k+1}, \dots, X_{k+n}	Y
1	1, ... 0	0, ... 0	0
2	1, ... 0	1, ... 1	1

Figure 11.6 Most Similar Systems Design

Since Y is invariant, it is not possible for the varying traits (X_{k+1}, \dots, X_{k+n}) to be causes of Y.

Instances	Similar Traits (Controlled variables)	Different Traits (Operant variables)	Dependent Variable
	X_1, \dots, X_k	X_{k+1}, \dots, X_{k+n}	Y
1	1, ... 0	0, ... 0	1
2	1, ... 0	1, ... 1	1

Figure 11.7 Most Different Systems Design

It is obvious that these two systems use the same logic as Mill: the Most Different Systems Design corresponds with Mill's Method of Agreement⁶¹ and the Most Similar Systems Design corresponds with the Method of Difference.

Thus the importance of Przeworski and Teune's approach lies not in its general logic as such. While Mill's methods suggest monocausal links, Przeworski and Teune's designs explicitly emphasize that *several* traits (or a combination of traits) may have led to the presence of the dependent variable.⁶² In principle, this opens the way to exploring syndromatic causal configurations.⁶³

Methods III

In the mid-1980s the American sociologist Charles Ragin developed a third qualitative method. This, too is, related to Mill's methodology, but it also deviates critically from it in employing Boolean algorithms.⁶⁴ The method is also called QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis). The main advantage of QCA is that it can also be used to analyse multiple syndromatic causality – the most complex causal configuration.

The following example illustrates how the method works.⁶⁵ Suppose a researcher suspects that the success of strikes in progress (dependent variable S) is affected by the following three factors: a booming market for the product produced by the strikers (A); the threat of sympathy strikes in other industries (B); and the existence of a large strike fund (C). If a variable is 'present' this is coded as 1, and if a variable is 'absent' this is coded as 0. In this way, a so-called truth table can be constructed for an entire series of successful strikes (see Figure 11.8). The instance frequency (the column at the far right) plays no

Condition			Successful Strike	Number of Instances
A	B	C	S	
0	0	0	0	9
1	0	0	1	2
0	1	0	1	3
0	0	1	1	1
1	1	0	1	2
1	0	1	1	1
0	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	3

Figure 11.8 Hypothetical truth table showing three causes of successful strikes

further role of importance in the Boolean analysis because each combination of causes has to be studied *sui generis*.

The truth table can subsequently be transformed into a formula in which upper-case letters denote 'presence' (score 1) and lower-case letters denote 'absence' (score 0). In our case, this gives the following equation:

$$(1) \quad S = Abc + aBc + abC + ABc + AbC + aBC + ABC.$$

Each of these seven combinations (sometimes also called 'prime implicants') describes a combination of causal factors (independent variables) which, in at least one case, are associated with the success of a strike. Equation 1 can be simplified by a process of reduction. The most important rule here is that when two prime implicants 'differ in only one causal condition yet produce the same outcome, then the causal condition that distinguishes the two expressions can be considered irrelevant and can be removed to create a simpler, combined expression'.⁶⁶ The logic underlying this rule is familiar to us from Mill: when only one causal condition diverges but the outcome remains the same, that causal condition is irrelevant in the presence of the other causal conditions.

The process of reduction is continued as far as possible. In Figure 11.8 each row with one condition present and two absent is combined with rows in which two conditions are present and one is not, since all these rows have the same outcome ($S = 1$) and each pair differs in terms of only one condition:

Abc and ABc produce Ac,
 Abc and AbC produce Ab,
 aBc and ABc produce Bc,
 aBc and aBC produce aB,
 abC and AbC produce bC,
 abC and aBC produce aC.

Similarly, each of the rows with one condition absent and two present can be combined with the row in which all three conditions are present:

ABc and ABC produce AB,
 AbC and ABC produce AC,
 aBC and ABC produce BC.

Furthermore, the reduced terms can also be combined with one another to produce even simpler expressions:

Ab and AB produce A,
 Ac and AC produce A,
 aB and AB produce B,
 Bc and BC produce B,
 aC and AC produce C,
 bC and BC produce C.

The result of all these manipulations is the final equation:

$$(2) \quad S = A + B + C.$$

In this example, it turns out that what we are dealing with is not a multiple *syndromatic* causality but a simplified form of multiple causality. The entire process appears to be quite laborious, but fortunately a computer program has been developed to calculate all the combinations and then reduce them to the smallest number and degree of complexity. This is of great importance, particularly in the case of complex configurations involving the comparison of eight or ten causal conditions for example.⁶⁷ The QCA method has so far been applied relatively seldom, but interest in it seems to be increasing. The first QCA studies in the field of labour history have been published, while Ragin has also demonstrated how earlier research results – including those of Stein Rokkan on the differential impact of the Russian Revolution on the international workers' movement – can be reinterpreted.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Of all the three approaches described above (the only formally grounded qualitative methods available), QCA seems to be the most useful to historians because it enables them to study multiple syndromatic configurations. But, even so, like the two other methods, the sophisticated QCA has some essential weaknesses.

First, all the approaches assume that variables are dichotomous: a condition is either 'absent' or 'present'. But real history is not that simple. Particularly in the case of 'major events', such as social revolutions, it is difficult to say when they have not occurred; by presuming a revolution could have occurred under certain circumstances we are in fact introducing theoretical considerations about the causes of revolutions that should really only emerge *during* the process of comparison.⁶⁹ But even if this kind of problem could be overcome – and there are indications that this is possible⁷⁰ – historians (like social

scientists) will inevitably have to do some injustice to reality in their classification. This is perhaps why contradictions sometimes occur when QCA is applied in practice.⁷¹

Second, none of the three methods offers a solution to the problem that, in history, several factors occurring at the same time can explain the same outcome. Historical research is concerned with highly complex phenomena (strike waves, working-class stratification and so on). There are few instances of such phenomena and one can never be certain that 'other factors are equal'. As the sociologists Barton and Lazarsfeld have noted: 'It is as though one set up the tables for a statistical or experimental research, but had only one or two cases to fill in each cell, and perhaps had to leave some entirely empty.'⁷² The situation in which there are more independent variables than instances is called the Problem of Overdetermination and seems to have been first pointed out by the econometrician Herbert Simon in the 1950s.⁷³ Several solutions to the problem have been put forward in the literature, but none is really effective.⁷⁴ It would seem there is no fundamental solution to the Problem of Overdetermination – the fact that there may be several explanations for a phenomenon opens the doors to paradigmatic controversies that cannot be settled by research.⁷⁵

One must therefore conclude that there are clear limits to the scope for formalized comparisons. Time and again researchers are discovering that, although formal methods are useful, it is in-depth ideographic knowledge that is decisive in the end.⁷⁶ This seems to be also true – and perhaps more so – for the 'highest' stage, the incorporating comparison. Here again, where overdetermination occurs researchers will themselves have to decide which interpretation to opt for, and will probably have to do this more often than with testing comparisons. However, this does not necessarily mean researchers cannot use formalized methods in this stage.⁷⁷

Organizational Forms

Comparative labour history is a difficult subject because it requires both a knowledge of different situations and considerable analytical ability. In exceptional cases, one individual is able to gain an in-depth knowledge of several instances and convincingly interpret this knowledge. But this type of individual – with Max Weber as prototype – is rare and, as the body of knowledge grows, their number will quickly decrease even more.

In the past ten to fifteen years a number of new approaches to organizing comparative labour history have been explored. They seem to be of two types. The first is the *collective model*, whereby several national specialists form a team and jointly conduct comparative research. As far as I know, this form was first tried out by the Australian and Canadian labour-history associations. Teams of researchers were formed to investigate a joint aspect of the labour history of both countries and co-write an essay on it. The same concept was applied on a somewhat larger scale during a recent conference held in Paris (1995) called 'l'invention du syndicalisme'. During this conference small groups

consisting of three or more national specialists worked together and co-wrote a report.⁷⁸ This model turned out to be very useful, but it can succeed only if team members employ a common theoretical framework.

A second approach is the *project model*, whereby a group of specialists each writes a national report and then tries to compare them. To enable such a comparison to be made, the specialists have to adhere closely to a list of points agreed in advance. The comparison itself can be made by the specialists during a workshop, but, employing a division of labour, it can also be left to one or more 'specialized comparativists'. Examples of this approach include the project on the comparative history of mutual benefit societies, organized in Amsterdam,⁷⁹ the congress on 'The European Sailor, 1570–1870',⁸⁰ and the 'Women and European Social Democracy During the Interwar Years' project.⁸¹

Both forms of organization could be developed further because, so far, they have tended to remain at the stage of contrasting comparisons – a stage in which less intellectual discipline is required than with testing comparisons. In any case, it is obvious that teamwork will be able to contribute much to the progress of comparative labour history – although there will probably always be excellent scholars who work entirely on their own.

Notes

- 1 I would like to express my appreciation to Larry Griffin and Charles Ragin for their extensive comments on an earlier version of this chapter. Any mistakes or lack of clarity that remain are, of course, my own responsibility.
- 2 Perhaps the first was the German economist and philosopher Lorenz von Stein (1815–90). In his book (1842), *Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs. Ein Beitrag zur Zeitgeschichte*, Leipzig: Wigand, he declared that the 'communism' emerging in France and in Britain deserved to be studied closely 'to uncover the common element which will also appear in our country' [that is, Germany]. 'Are we to remain passive', he asked rhetorically, 'while it gains ground and is left unchannelled because we do not understand it?'
- 3 Sombart, Werner (1976), *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?*, trans. Patricia M. Hocking and C.T. Husbands, London: Macmillan; originally (1906), *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?*, Tübingen: Mohr.
- 4 The most significant other studies before the Second World War are, to my knowledge, Kindermann, Carl (1896), *Zur organischen Güterverteilung. II. Die Glasarbeiter Deutschlands und der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika in ihrer allgemeinen materiellen Lage*, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, on glassworkers in Germany and the USA; Bötcher, Hans (1922), *Zur revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung in Amerika, Deutschland und England. Eine vergleichende Betrachtung*, Jena: Gustav Fischer, on syndicalism in Britain, Germany and the USA; Bull, Edvard (1922), *Den Skandinaviske Arbejderbevegelse 1914–1920*, Kristiania: DNA, on different degrees of labour radicalism in Denmark, Norway and Sweden; De Montgomery, Bo-Gabriel (1922), *British and Continental Labour Politics. The Political Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in Great Britain, France and the Scandinavian Countries, 1900–1922*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
- 5 This failing seems to be common to *all* historians, not just labour historians. It is characteristic that Marc Bloch's comparative approach – as expounded in his (1969), 'A Contribution Towards a Comparative History of European Societies', in

Land and Work in Mediaeval Europe. Selected Papers by Marc Bloch, trans. J.E. Anderson, New York: Harper & Row, pp. 44–81 (original version (1928), 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes', *Revue de synthèse historique*, 46, pp. 15–50) – has prompted all kinds of studies, but seems to have had little influence on historians' practical-comparative research. See Raftis, J. Ambrose (1962), 'Marc Bloch's Comparative Method and the Rural History of Medieval England', *Medieval Studies*, 24, pp. 349–68; Sewell, William H. jr (1963), 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History', *History and Theory*, 3, pp. 208–18; Olin Hill, Alette and Hill, Boyd H. jr (1980), 'Marc Bloch and Comparative History', *American Historical Review*, 85, pp. 828–46; Atsma, Hartmut and Burguière, André (eds) (1990), *Marc Bloch aujourd'hui: histoire comparée et sciences sociales*, Paris: EHEES.

It is also remarkable that virtually all the historical works that play a role in the methodological debate have been written by sociologists (Perry Anderson, Barrington Moore jr, Theda Skocpol and Immanuel Wallerstein, for example) and not by historians.

- 6 The most important example of a detailed discussion seems to be Eisenberg, Christiane (1994), 'Die Arbeiterbewegungen der Welt im Vergleich. Methodenkritische Bemerkungen zu einem Projekt des Internationalen Instituts für Sozialgeschichte in Amsterdam', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 34, pp. 397–410; Welskopp, Thomas (1995), 'Stolpersteine auf dem Königsweg. Methodenkritische Anmerkungen zum internationalen Vergleich in der Gesellschaftsgeschichte', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 35, pp. 339–67; van der Linden, Marcel and Rojahn, Jürgen (1995), 'Methodologische Probleme vergleichender Sozialgeschichte. Eine Erwiderung auf Christiane Eisenbergs "methodenkritische Bemerkungen" zu einem IISG-Projekt', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 35, pp. 231–39.
- 7 Przeworski, Adam (1987), 'Methods of Cross-National Research, 1970–1983', in Meinolf Dierkes, Hans N. Weiler and Ariane Berthoin Antal (eds), *Comparative Policy Research. Learning from Experience*, Aldershot: Gower, pp. 31–49 at p. 31.
- 8 Markey, Ray (1990), 'Australia', in Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds), *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870–1914*, vol. 2, Leiden: Brill, pp. 579–608 at p. 587.
- 9 Nimura, Kazuo (1990), 'Japan', in van der Linden and Rojahn, *Formation*, 2, pp. 673–97 at p. 681.
- 10 This distinction is the theme of DeFelice, Gene E. (1980–81), 'Comparison Misconceived. Common Nonsense in Comparative Politics', *Comparative Politics*, 13, pp. 119–26.
- 11 Ibid., p. 124.
- 12 Hannan, Michael T. and Freeman, John (1989), *Organizational Ecology*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 13 Inkeles, Alex (1971), 'Fieldwork Problems in Comparative Research on Modernization', in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *Essays on Modernization of Underdeveloped Societies*, vol. 2, Bombay: Thacker, pp. 20–75, at pp. 56–59; Elder, Joseph W. (1976), 'Comparative Cross-National Methodology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2, pp. 209–30 at pp. 222–23.
- 14 Hymes, Dell (1970), 'Linguistic Aspects of Comparative Political Research', in Robert T. Holt and John E. Turner (eds), *The Methodology of Comparative Research*, New York: Free Press, pp. 295–341.
- 15 Kuznets, Simon (1959), *Six Lectures on Economic Growth*, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, pp. 17–18; Zelditch, Morris jr (1971), 'Intelligible Comparisons', in Ivan Vallier (ed.), *Comparative Methods in Sociology. Essays on Trends and Applications*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 267–307 at p. 273.
- 16 A good example is given by Locke, Richard M. and Thelen, Kathleen (1995), 'Apples and Oranges Revisited. Contextualized Comparisons and the Study of Comparative Labor Politics', *Politics and Society*, 23, pp. 337–67. Locke and Thelen argue plausibly that contemporary 'processes that at first glance look alike

- (for example, work reorganization or bargaining decentralization) are not necessarily the same or, rather, do not possess the same significance in a variety of different national contexts.' They also argue 'that developments that initially look quite different may in substance actually be quite similar' (p. 359).
- 17 Straus, Murray A. (1969), 'Phenomenal Identity and Conceptual Equivalence of Measurement in Cross-National Comparative Research', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, **31**, pp. 233–39 at pp. 234–35.
 - 18 Lafferty, William M. (1972), 'Contexts, Levels, and the Language of Comparison. Alternative Research', *Social Science Information*, **11** (2), pp. 63–91 at pp. 64–69; Lieberman, Stanley (1985), *Making It Count. The Improvement of Social Research and Theory*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 107–108; Zelditch, 'Intelligible Comparisons', pp. 280–82.
 - 19 Lieberman, *Making It Count*, p. 57.
 - 20 In anthropology solutions to Galton's problem have been sought by Raoul Naroll in particular, but they are all based on statistical analysis and use geographical propinquity to measure diffusion. 'That is, they assume that similarities between neighbors are more likely to reflect diffusion than similarities among more widely separated peoples.' Naroll, Raoul (1970), 'Galton's Problem', in Raoul Naroll and Ronald Cohen (eds), *A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 974–89 at p. 979. See also Strauss, David J. and Orans, Martin (1975), 'Mighty Sifts. A Critical Analysis of Solutions to Galton's Problem and a Partial Solution', *Current Anthropology*, **16**, pp. 573–94. It is clear that these 'solutions' are of little use to labour historians since, on the one hand, they seldom carry out cross-national statistical analyses and, on the other hand, geographical propinquity does not seem to be a useful criterion (for a certain period at least, Australia can be considered to have been a remote part of the British Empire for example).
 - 21 Lijphart, Arend (1975–76), 'The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research', *Comparative Political Studies*, **8**, pp. 158–77 at p. 171.
 - 22 Several relevant diffusion patterns are discussed in Klingman, David (1980), 'Temporal and Spatial Diffusion in the Comparative Analysis of Social Change', *American Political Science Review*, **74**, pp. 123–37; Wellhofer, E. Spencer (1989), 'The Comparative Method and the Study of Development, Diffusion, and Social Change', *Comparative Political Studies*, **22**, pp. 315–42; Frendreis, John P. (1989), 'Modeling Spatial Diffusion. Reaction to Wellhofer', *Comparative Political Studies*, **22**, pp. 343–52. See also Deane, Glenn, Beck, E.M. and Tolnay, Stewart (1999), 'Incorporating Space into Social Histories. How Spatial Processes Operate and How We Observe Them', in Larry J. Griffin and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *New Methods for Social History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57–80.
 - 23 See the efforts to arrive at a typology in Elder, 'Comparative Cross-National Methodology'; Bonnell, Victoria E. (1980), 'The Uses of Theory, Concepts and Comparison in Historical Sociology', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, **22**, pp. 156–73; Skocpol, Theda and Somers, Margaret, 'The Uses of Comparative Research in Macrosocial Inquiry', *ibid.*, pp. 174–97; Tilly, Charles (1984), *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation; Van den Braembussche, A.A. (1989), 'Historical Explanation and Comparative Method. Toward a Theory of the History of Society', *History and Theory*, **28**, pp. 1–24.
 - 24 A fundamental discussion of the differences between these concepts is given in Marradi, Alberto (1990), 'Classification, Typology, Taxonomy', *Quality and Quantity*, **24**, pp. 129–57.
 - 25 Some recent examples can be found in Katznelson, Ira and Zelberg, Aristide R. (eds) (1986), *Working-Class Formation. Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Tenfelde, Klaus (ed.) (1986), *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung im Vergleich*, Munich: Oldenbourg; Geary, Richard (ed.) (1989), *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe*

- before 1914, Oxford: Berg; Berger, Stefan and Broughton, David (eds) (1995), *The Force of Labour. The Western European Labour Movement and the Working Class in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford and Washington, DC: Berg.
- 26 Jasper, James M. (1987), 'Two or Twenty Countries. Contrasting Styles of Comparative Research', *Comparative Social Research*, **10**, pp. 205–29. Jasper argues that the nomothetic ('empiricist') and the ideographic approaches 'stop at different moments in the continual process of refining variables: the empiricist approach when the same variable can be isolated or measured in each country, the ideographic approach when differences in the variables have been uncovered' (pp. 210–11).
 - 27 Mommsen, Hans (1966), 'Arbeiterbewegung', in C.D. Kernig (ed.), *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft. Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie*, vol. 1, Freiburg: Herder, cols. 273–313.
 - 28 Stretton, Hugh (1969), *The Political Sciences. General Principles of Selection in Social Science and History*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 247.
 - 29 Sartori, Giovanni (1991), 'Comparing and Miscomparing', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, **3**, pp. 243–57 at p. 244.
 - 30 Berger, Stefan (1994), *The British Labour Party and the German Social Democrats, 1900–1931. A Comparative Study*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 254.
 - 31 Bloch, 'Contribution', pp. 47–48.
 - 32 Tilly, *Big Structures*, p. 147.
 - 33 The first attempt was by McMichael, Philip (1990), 'Incorporating Comparison Within a World-Historical Perspective. An Alternative Comparative Method', *American Sociological Review*, **55**, pp. 385–97.
 - 34 See p. 93, n. 23.
 - 35 Rokkan, Stein (1970), *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, New York: McKay.
 - 36 Reichenbach, Hans (1951), *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 230. Compare Cohen, Morris R. and Nagel, Ernest, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 342: 'No rule can be given to direct our attention to the significant factors in a situation.' The limits of methodological prescription for the stage prior to hypothesis testing are explored in Barton, Allen H. and Lazarsfeld, Paul F. (1955), 'Some Functions of Qualitative Analysis in Social Research', in *Sociologica. Aufsätze Max Horkheimer zum sechzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet*, Frankfurt am Main: EVA, pp. 321–61.
 - 37 Löwenthal, Richard (1981), 'The "Missing Revolution" in Industrial Societies. Comparative Reflections on a German Problem', in Volker R. Berghahn and Martin Kitchen (eds), *Germany in the Age of Total War*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 240–57 at pp. 256–57.
 - 38 I am basing this on just a few of the many factors enumerated in Friedman, Debra (1983), 'Why Workers Strike. Individual Decisions and Structural Constraints', in Michael Hechter (ed.), *The Microfoundations of Macrosociology*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 250–83.
 - 39 Cohen and Nagel, *Introduction to Logic*, p. 270.
 - 40 Ibid. See also Savolainen, Jukka (1993–94), 'The Rationality of Drawing Big Conclusions on Small Samples. In Defense of Mill's Methods', *Social Forces*, **72**, pp. 1217–24.
 - 41 Sartori rightly observes: 'To classify is to order a given universe into classes that are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. Hence, classifications do establish what is same and what is not. "Same" brings together whatever falls into a given class; "different" is what falls under other classes. Let it also be underscored that classes do not impute "real sameness", but *similarity*. The objects that fall into a same class are more similar among themselves – with respect to the criterion of the sorting – than to the objects that fall into other classes. But this leaves us with highly flexible degrees of similarity. As a rule of thumb, the smaller the number of classes yielded by a classification, the higher its intra-class variation (its classes

- incorporate, so to speak, very different ones). Conversely, the greater the number of classes, the lesser the intra-class variance. If we divide the world just into monarchies and republics, we have two classes that are, if anything, impossibly large and excessively varied. Still, the example shows that there is no merit in the objection that to classify is to freeze sameness. Any class, no matter how minute, allows for intra-class variations (at least of degree); and it is up to the classifier to decide how much his classes are to be inclusive (broad) or discriminating (narrow).' Sartori, 'Comparing and Miscomparing', p. 246.
- 42 Przeworski, Adam and Teune, Henri (1970), *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, New York: Wiley-Interscience, p. 10.
- 43 Chapter 3 of this volume.
- 44 Ragin, Charles (1987), *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 10–11, 162.
- 45 This concerns a comparison of one particular aspect of two different instances. Countless comparisons between two countries are possible, of course, but those would be comparisons of a variety of aspects of those two countries.
- 46 Tilly, *Big Structures*, p. 76.
- 47 Lieberman, Stanley (1991–92), 'Small *N*'s and Big Conclusions. An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases', *Social Forces*, 70, pp. 307–20 at pp. 308–309.
- 48 Broeze, Frank (1991), 'Militancy and Pragmatism. An International Perspective on Maritime Labour, 1870–1914', *International Review of Social History*, 36, pp. 165–200 (ten countries); van der Linden, Marcel and Thorpe, Wayne, 'The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism', in this present volume, Chapter 4 (12 countries).
- Sociologists and political scientists who study the labour movement are less uneasy than historians in using relatively large samples. See, for example, Armingeon, Klaus (1989), 'Sozialdemokratie am Ende? Die Entwicklung der Macht sozialdemokratischer Parteien im internationalen Vergleich 1945–1988', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 18, pp. 321–45; Western, Bruce (1993), 'Postwar Unionization in Eighteen Advanced Capitalist Countries', *American Sociological Review*, 58, pp. 266–82.
- 49 See also Bollen, Kenneth A., Entwistle, Barbara and Alderson, Arthur S. (1993), 'Macrocomparative Research Methods', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, pp. 321–51 at pp. 331–34.
- 50 '[Samples] often are limited to large countries, but it is rare to see this restriction justified on substantive grounds or resulting inferences limited to macrostates.' Bollen *et al.*, 'Macrocomparative Research Methods', pp. 331–32.
- 51 Christiane Eisenberg has suggested that when making comparisons a 'Western European pioneer labour-movement country' should be placed centrally; for studies of the trade union movement this would be England and for studies of social democracy, Germany. This would 'halve' Galton's problem, as it were, because pioneer countries cannot be influenced by other countries. However, one can argue that (i) Galton's problem would continue to exist for the other countries involved in the comparison and (ii) that, as a result, international power relationships can be scientifically galvanized. See Eisenberg, 'Arbeiterbewegungen', pp. 408–409; Thorpe, Wayne (1993), 'Vergleichende Arbeitergeschichte. Aus der Arbeit des Amsterdamer Internationalen Instituts für Sozialgeschichte', 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 8, pp. 83–99 at p. 94.
- 52 Aarebrot, F. and Bakka, P.H. (1992), 'Die vergleichende Methode in der Politikwissenschaft', in Dirk Berg-Schlosser and F. Müller-Rommel (eds), *Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, Opladen: Leske & Budrich, pp. 51–69; and De Meur, Gisèle and Berg-Schlosser, Dirk, 'Comparing Political Systems. Establishing Similarities and Dissimilarities', *European Journal of Political Research*, 26, pp. 193–219.
- 53 Nowak, Stefan (1977), *Methodology of Sociological Research. General Problems*, trans. Maria Olga Lepa, Warsaw and Dordrecht: PWN/Reidel, p. 24.

- 54 'Description' is certainly *not* a 'lower form' of social and historical research. Its goal is the illumination of specific instances.
- 55 Although QCA has, as far as I am aware, so far been applied only to small samples, in principle the method can also be applied to extremely large numbers of instances. See Griffin, Larry and Ragin, Charles C. (1994–95), 'Some Observations on Formal Methods of Qualitative Analysis', *Sociological Methods and Research*, **23**, pp. 4–21 at p. 9. At the same time, it is true that in QCA 'combinations of dichotomous variables grow exponentially from a base of two, and thus a large number of independent conditions makes QCA unwieldy and decreases the likelihood that any given combination will have an empirical referent or will be theoretically interpretable. Moreover, the larger the number of independent conditions, the more likely that each possible combination with a case in it will have only that one case.' See Amenta, Edwin and Poulsen, Jane D. (1994–95), 'Where to Begin. A Survey of Five Approaches to Selecting Independent Variables for Qualitative Comparative Analysis', *Sociological Methods and Research*, **23**, pp. 22–53 at p. 23.
- 56 Skocpol, Theda (1979), *States and Social Revolutions. A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Skocpol and Somers, 'Uses of Comparative Research'; Skocpol (1986), 'Analyzing Causal Configurations in History. A Rejoinder to Nichols', *Comparative Social Research*, **9**, pp. 187–94.
- 57 Mill, John Stuart (1973), 'A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive', in idem, *Collected Works*, vol. 7, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 388–92.
- 58 Nichols, Elizabeth (1986), 'Skocpol on Revolution. Comparative Analysis vs. Historical Conjuncture', *Comparative Social Research*, **9**, pp. 163–86.
- 59 This has already been demonstrated in Cohen and Nagel, *Introduction to Logic*, pp. 251–61.
- 60 Mill, 'A System of Logic', p. 452.
- 61 DeFelice, Gene E. (1986), 'Causal Inference and Comparative Methods', *Comparative Political Studies*, **19**, pp. 415–37; López, Juan J. (1992), 'Theory Choice in Comparative Social Inquiry', *Polity*, **25**, pp. 267–82 at p. 273.
- 62 Przeworski and Teune actually regard the importance of their designs differently – namely, in their ability to enable comparisons between systemic and subsystemic configurations. The assertion of Lijphart, 'Comparable Cases Strategy', and others that the Most Similar Systems Design 'should be assigned to the category of statistical analysis' is rightly rejected by López, 'Theory Choice', p. 273.
- 63 The designs developed by Przeworski and Teune are further elaborated in Berg-Schlosser, Dirk, De Meur, Gisèle and Ragin, Charles C. (1996), 'Political Methodology. Qualitative Methods', in Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 749–68.
- 64 In addition to Ragin, *Comparative Method*, see Abell, Peter (1989), 'Foundations for a Qualitative Comparative Method', *International Review of Social History*, **34**, pp. 103–109; Romme, A. Georges L. (1995), 'Boolean Comparative Analysis of Qualitative Data. A Methodological Note', *Quality and Quantity*, **29**, pp. 317–29; and Ragin, 'The Logic of Qualitative Comparative Analysis', in Griffin and van der Linden, *New Methods for Social History*, pp. 105–24.
- 65 This example is based on an amalgamation of two cases described in Ragin, *Comparative Method*, pp. 89–98.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 67 Drass, Kriss and Ragin, Charles (1986), *QCA. A Microcomputer Package for Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Social Data*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University/Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research.
- 68 Griffin, Larry J. *et al.* (1991), 'Theoretical Generality, Case Particularity. Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Trade Union Growth and Decline', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, **32**, pp. 110–36; Brown, Cliff and Boswell, Terry (1994–95), 'Strikebreaking or Solidarity in the Great Steel Strike of

1919. A Split Labor Market, Game-Theoretic, and QCA Analysis', *American Journal of Sociology*, **100**, pp.1479–59; Ragin, *Comparative Method*, pp. 127–33.
- 69 See Burawoy, Michael (1989), 'Two Methods in Search of Science. Skocpol versus Trotsky', *Theory and Society*, **18**, pp. 759–805.
- 70 A breakthrough seems to be at hand in Ragin, Charles C. (2000), *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Ragin here develops an approach allowing the use of graded membership in sets.
- 71 Griffin and Ragin, 'Some Observations on Formal Methods', pp. 9–10.
- 72 Barton and Lazarsfeld, 'Some Functions of Qualitative Analysis', p. 348.
- 73 Simon, Herbert A. (1953), 'Causal Ordering and Identifiability', in William C. Hood and Tjalling C. Koopmans (eds), *Studies in Econometric Method*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 49–74.
- 74 Lijphart, Arend (1971), 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *American Political Science Review*, **65**, pp. 682–93.
- 75 López, 'Theory Choice', pp. 279–81.
- 76 In this respect, the problem of counterfactuals might also be important since each comparative hypothesis logically contains a counterfactual: if one believes Y is caused by X it follows that one presumes Y would not have occurred without X. One way in which a researcher can test the plausibility of his or her hypothesis is to convert that hypothesis into a counterfactual argument.
- 77 The so-called Event-Structure Analysis (ESA), which reconstructs narratives causally, for example. See Heise, David (1989), 'Modeling Event Structures', *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, **14**, pp. 139–69. For detailed concrete historical examples, see Griffin, Larry J. (1992–93), 'Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology', *American Journal of Sociology*, **98**, pp. 1094–133, and Griffin, Larry J. and Korstadt, Robert R. (1999), 'Historical Inference and Event-Structure Analysis', in Griffin and van der Linden, *New Methods for Social History*, pp. 145–65. Griffin and Ragin, 'Some Observations on Formal Methods', pp. 14–15, suggest ESA may be suitable for incorporating comparisons.
- 78 Robert, Jean-Louis, Boll, Friedhelm and Prost, Antoine (eds) (1997), *L'invention des syndicalismes. Le syndicalisme en Europe occidentale à la fin du XIXe siècle*, Paris: Sorbonne.
- 79 The project resulted in the conference, *Un passé riche d'avenir* (Paris, 1–3 December 1992), and a book, van der Linden, Marcel (ed.) (1996), *Social Security Mutualism. The Comparative History of Mutual Benefit Societies*, Berne: Peter Lang.
- 80 The Hague/Amsterdam, 19–22 October 1994. See Van Royen, Paul C., Bruijn, Jaap R. and Lucassen, Jan (eds) (1997), *'Those Emblems of Hell'? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570–1870*, St John: International Maritime History Association.
- 81 The results have been published as Gruber, Helmut and Graves, Pamela (eds) (1998) *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women*, New York: Berghahn.

Chapter 12

How Normal is the ‘Normal’ Employment Relationship?

Introduction

Whoever speaks about the global market should not keep silent about labour. ‘Globalization’ has become a popular, yet ambiguous, term, not least because it implies a justification for the demolition of ‘outdated’ forms of employment. Flexibilization, telework based at home, the dismantling of the employee rights, ostensible self-employment – this is all considered to be new and (post-)modern. The debate on globalization in the business press gives the impression that we are currently witnessing the dawning of a new era of far-reaching, unprecedented innovations affecting the working world. But is this really true?

Politicians, economists and sociologists all have assumed that, over time, capitalism creates certain, so-called normal employment relationships and that these correspond best with profitability and capital accumulation. Recently, however, many have become convinced that the economic reality is significantly more complicated than was once thought. Capitalism produces multifarious new forms of exploitation without abandoning the use of its older forms. Slavery was not only a part of early colonialism, it exists even today in certain parts of the world, such as the Amazon and southern Asia. The domestic or putting-out system, in which families are contracted by businesses to produce goods at home, is not a purely pre-industrial phenomenon (as the term ‘proto-industry’ suggests), but has once again become a frequent occurrence and even appears to be on the rise. In agriculture, the practice of sharecropping, so often declared dead, has been resurrected in various forms, as can be found in California, for example, since the 1970s.

The idea that normal employment relationships actually exist in capitalism has become entrenched in the thinking not only of the defenders of social market economy but also of radical social critics. The concept is a ‘prevailing fiction’ (to use Ulrich Mückenberger’s phrase) and is based on a form of wage labour characterized by:¹

- continuity and stability of employment
- a full-time position for one employer only at the employer’s place of business

- a wage that enables an employee to support a small family (employee, non-employed spouse, one child), without falling below a certain standard of living
- legally stipulated rights to protection and participation/codetermination
- social insurance benefits based on the length of employment and the level of previously earned income.

Initial Doubts

For a long time, research in social history, like social policy itself, was based on the assumption that 'normal employment relationships' were the logical result of capitalist development and that all other forms of dependent employment would gradually disappear. By the 1970s at the latest, this view had been undermined by the appearance, in highly developed countries, of an emerging division of the labour force into two sectors. One was a relatively small sector consisting of the permanently employed whose work processes were being made more 'flexible' through just-in-time production, job rotation, quality circles and so on; the other was a growing sector, characterized by insecurity and consisting of the ostensible self-employed, part-time workers, temporary help, and so on.² In the so-called Third World and even in the East and South-east Asian tiger states, normal employment relationships have always been the exception rather than the rule. Insecure employment relationships, underemployment and long-term unemployment are the reality there.

Parallel to this development, historical research began to reveal that regular wage labour in the big businesses of capitalist centres had never been as important as earlier theories had led us to believe. Moreover, it was also recognized that the establishment of normal employment relationships was all but inevitable in this process. A milestone in this debate was the essay by Harvard economist Stephen Marglin, who argued in 1974 that the factory system could in no way attribute its historical success to a greater efficiency, but to the fact that the managers in mainly hierarchical systems of production could break the power of the labour force more easily. Therefore, the origins of the factory were not rooted in technological progress but in class conflict directed from the top. This theory has been proven since to be untenable in its original form. However, the debate sparked by Marglin's work has demonstrated clearly that class antagonism exerted a major influence on the emergence of modern forms of capitalist employment relationships.³

Even more important to this debate was the essay by Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin published 11 years later, in which the emergence of modern mass production was not interpreted as the inevitable consequence of economic forces, but as the contingent result of a historically 'open-ended' competition in the nineteenth century. Sabel and Zeitlin argue plausibly that, originally, there had been an equally efficient alternative to big centralized factories – namely, the networks of small decentralized ones.⁴

By the 1960s it was widely discerned that nowhere in the Third World did regular wage labour predominate, despite all achievements in 'development'.

On the contrary, poor households in the rapidly growing cities and in the rural communities felt forced increasingly to resort to a number of survival strategies, all of which at least shared the simple characteristic that they were far from what might be called normal employment relationships. The most important evidence of this insight was the increasing popularity of the term 'informal sector', which debuted in the early 1970s.⁵ Since then, this term has been criticized innumerable times but remains widely used for lack of a better, more convincing alternative.⁶

Moreover, with the emergence of research in women's history, it became clear that theories in history and social sciences had usually been based on the implicit and untenable presumption that wage-earners could only be studied and understood as individuals. In reality, however, they are almost always members of a family household. The work of wage-earners only represented a portion of the entire work that is done in a household.

A New Interpretation Emerges

Recently, the similarities between the various criticisms of the old paradigm of normal employment relationships have become more evident. The (still partly vague) outlines of a new interpretation are now taking shape. Nowadays, it is rarely contested that an informal sector exists in the capitalist centres and is actually expanding in some countries.⁷ Even the idea that households combine several survival strategies is making headway in wider circles of historical and social scientific research.⁸

Observation of the worldwide development of employment over the last two or three centuries teaches us that, historically and geographically, normal employment relationships are indeed rather 'abnormal'. In the Third World there was, and is, only a small permanently employed labour force protected by social insurance. The few employees who enjoy relatively secure positions are thus often said to comprise the aristocracy of the workforce⁹ – an inaccurate label since these relatively privileged employees frequently have strong ties to the villages in which they grew up and transfer a large portion of their income there.¹⁰ Ken Post draws the correct conclusion when he states that 'in class terms, the pattern of capitalist development on the periphery was incapable of following the full "proletarianizing" logic of that of the centre'.¹¹

The majority of scholars today accept two assertions: first, the great majority of migrants who move from the countryside to the cities never achieve normal employment – if they ever do have the opportunity to work for wages, then it is only on a short-term and irregular basis. Second, urban overpopulation leads to a number of economic activities that cannot necessarily be classified easily.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that working-class households in the urban centres were and are seldom completely dependent on wage labour (naturally combined with housework done primarily but not exclusively by women). Earned wages were and are still usually supplemented by side income earned by the various family members from sources such as the following:¹²

- production of consumer goods for one's own use (subsistence labour) – including, for example, sewing clothes, raising pigs, chickens, and other livestock, and collecting trash
- small-scale production and retail of goods, such as tailoring, raising livestock, collecting rags to sell, peddling
- rental of land, working materials, living space, including the rental of a bed or room to a boarder or lodger
- receipt of money, goods or services without immediate reciprocity being necessary – including the receipt of charity, social assistance and welfare, and support by friends and acquaintances when in need
- stealing at the workplace, theft and embezzlement
- receipt of credit through pawnbroking.

More recent historical research even suggests that the number of working-class families in Europe and North America that could live exclusively on a single wage income was always rather small. The historical importance of the male breadwinner needs to be greatly revised. Often a family had several members who were earning wages at the same time, and there were people then (just as there are today in the Third World) who held down several jobs at once.

In light of such research findings, we need to reinterpret the erosion of normal employment relationships in Europe and North America as being the return to the 'normal' condition of irregular employment relationships in global capitalism.

The Consequences

These new insights have far-reaching consequences. First, the task ahead is to re-evaluate the contrasts between the lower classes of the First and Third Worlds – although serious differences undoubtedly exist. In the cities of the First World, social classes exist whose work history is beginning to resemble in many ways that of the urban poor in the slums of the Third World, despite the large gap between their standards of living.¹³

Second, the dividing line between wage labour and small entrepreneurship is much more obscure than was originally thought. In both the Third and First Worlds there are grey zones of (ostensible) self-employment, in which individuals formally work on their own but in reality are dependent on one or two customers. This type of self-employment has been widespread in peripheral capitalism for decades, but lately it has also been increasing rapidly in the centres, such as in the construction business. Generally, there seems to be a historical connection in highly developed capitalism between phases of rising unemployment, on the one hand, and stagnation or growth of 'small-scale' self-employment, on the other.

Third, the boundary between wage labourers and the marginal groups of the *Lumpenproletariat* (riff-raff) is not nearly as obvious as older theories would have us believe. In times of desperation, regularly employed wage-earners may indeed exhibit behaviour characteristic of the *Lumpenproletariat*, such as

begging and prostitution, as a way of surviving. They will also steal at the workplace, which represents thoroughly criminal behaviour from the entrepreneurial viewpoint. Yet, the experience in the Third World has drawn our attention to a lower social class that can be characterized neither as the industrial reserve army in a Marxist sense nor as the classic *Lumpenproletariat*. Inevitably we need to come up with a new concept to apply to insecure employment relationships in this respect.

Fourth, the concept of the 'free' labourer is less precise than is usually assumed. According to the classic definition, wage-earners, as 'free persons' are free in a double sense because they alone market their own labour as a commodity and have 'no other commodity for sale'. In many cases, however, the situation of wage-earners is much more complicated. Even though they are independent in a formal sense, they can be obligated to an employer – for example, through debt (advances that must be repaid), through room and board (company housing and the like) or through claims to company pensions.

Fifth and last, the strict differentiation commonly made in Europe between urban and rural life must be revised. Contrary to what modernization theories like to tell us, the ties of urban migrants to their home villages often do not weaken, but rather strengthen, over time. The most probable reason for this is the lack of social insurance systems. As a result, the villages become safety nets during times of economic crisis. Recently, though, many villages have been unable to fulfil this task, because the rise of a commodity economy has drained their capacity for subsistence.

What it means to be classified as 'working-class' is changing; the category is becoming extremely multifaceted. The normal employment relationship is far less 'normal' than has generally been held. Therefore, our task is not primarily to explain why socially insured wage labour is disappearing, but to answer the opposite questions concerning when and why there have been periods of normal employment relationships throughout history.

We could even go a step further and ask, as did Claude Meillassoux and Immanuel Wallerstein, why a 'full-time proletarian' in capitalism should have existed or can now even exist at all. From the entrepreneurial standpoint, part-time proletarians are cheaper by far. Part-time proletarians (who belong to a household in which there are other sources of income, such as from agricultural subsistence work or from self-employment) lower the bottommost, barely acceptable wage threshold because they have other forms of real income. In a strictly proletarian household, however, the wage income must cover the minimum costs of survival and reproduction. That is, according to Immanuel Wallerstein, 'why wage labor has *never* been the exclusive, and until recently not even the principal, form of labor in the capitalist world-economy'.¹⁴ Suddenly our problem has flipped. Instead of explaining why proletarianization took place, we have to explain why the process was so incomplete, or even why it happened at all.

Notes

- 1 Here I am plagiarizing Hinrichs, Karl (1989), 'Irreguläre Beschäftigungsverhältnisse und soziale Sicherheit. Facetten der "Erosion" des Normalarbeitsverhältnisses in der Bundesrepublik', *Prokla*, 77, pp. 7–32, esp. pp. 10–15. The concrete definition of what is 'normal' (in terms of working hours and so on) should, of course, be specified historically and geographically.
- 2 A classical analysis of some of these trends has already been presented in Kern, Horst and Schumann, Michael (1984), *Das Ende der Arbeitsteilung? Rationalisierung in der industriellen Produktion. Bestandsaufnahme, Trendbestimmung*, Munich: Beck. A survey of recent research results can be found in Smith, Vicki (1997), 'New Forms of Work Organization', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, pp. 315–39.
- 3 Marglin, Stephen (1974), 'What Do Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production', *Review of Radical Political Economy*, 6, pp. 60–112. Important contributions to this predominantly Anglo-Saxon debate were Sokoloff, Kenneth L. (1984), 'Was the Transition from the Artisanal Shop to the Nonmechanized Factory Associated with Gains in Efficiency? Evidence from the U.S. Manufacturing Censuses of 1820 and 1850', *Explorations in Economic History*, 21, pp. 351–82; Landes, David S. (1986), 'What Do Bosses Really Do?', *Journal of Economic History*, 46, pp. 585–623; Jones, S.R.H. (1987), 'Technology, Transaction Costs, and the Transition to Factory Production in the British Silk Industry, 1700–1870', *Journal of Economic History*, 47, pp. 71–96; Christiansen, Jens and Philips, Peter (1991), 'The Transition from Outwork to Factory Production in the Boot and Shoe Industry, 1830–1880', in Sanford M. Jacoby (ed.), *Masters to Managers. Historical and Comparative Perspectives on American Employers*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 21–42; Berg, Maxine (1991), 'On the Origins of Capitalist Hierarchy', in Bo Gustaffson (ed.), *Power and Economic Institutions. Reinterpretations in Economic History*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar, pp. 173–94; Magnusson, Lars (1991), 'From Verlag to Factory. The Contest for Efficient Property Rights', in *ibid.*, pp. 195–222; Marglin, Stephen A. (1991), 'Understanding Capitalism. Control versus Efficiency', in *ibid.*, pp. 225–52.
- 4 Sabel, Charles and Zeitlin, Jonathan (1984), 'Historical Alternatives to Mass Production', *Past and Present*, 108, pp. 133–76.
- 5 Foundational was the essay by Hart, Keith (1983), 'Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11, pp. 61–89. There is a massive literature on this concept. A first orientation is given in Smith, M. Estellie (1989), 'The Informal Economy', in Stuart Plattner (ed.), *Economic Anthropology*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 292–317.
- 6 An important attempt at clarification is Portes, Alejandro (1983), 'The Informal Sector. Definition, Controversy, and Relation to National Development', *Review [Fernand Braudel Center, Binghamton]*, 7 (1), pp. 151–74.
- 7 For example Portes, Alejandro and Sassen-Koob, Saskia (1987–88), 'Making It Underground. Comparative Material on the Informal Sector in Western Market Economies', *American Journal of Sociology*, 93, pp. 30–61.
- 8 See, for instance, the (1987) debate 'Family Strategy. A Dialogue', *Historical Methods*, 20, pp. 113–25; Roberts, B. (1994), 'Informal Economy and Family Strategies', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 18, pp. 6–23.
- 9 The 'labour aristocracy' concept was originally developed by Friedrich Engels and Lenin. It was probably used for the first time in a Third World context in Arrighi, Giovanni and Saul, John S. (1968), 'Socialism and Economic Development in Tropical Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6 (2), pp. 141–69, reprinted in Arrighi and Saul (1973), *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, pp. 11–43.
- 10 See, for example, the fascinating study by Peace, Adrian (1979), *Choice, Class and Conflict. A Study of Southern Nigerian Factory Workers*, Brighton: Harvester Press.

- Still suggestive is Allen, V.L. (1972), 'The Meaning of the Working Class in Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, **10**, pp. 169–89.
- 11 Post, Ken (1997), *Revolution's Other World. Communism and the Periphery, 1917–39*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 5. An example of prolonged semi-proletarianization is given in Chang, Kyung-Sup (1995), 'Gender and Abortive Capitalist Social Transformation. Semi-Proletarianization of South Korean Women', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, **36**, pp. 61–81. See also Waterman, Peter (1983), 'The Concept of the "Semiproletarianized Peasantry". An Empirical and Theoretical Note', in Bernard Magubane and Nzongola-Ntalaja (eds), *Proletarianization and Class Struggle in Africa*, San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, pp. 172–83.
 - 12 Most of these forms are also mentioned in Friedman, Kathie (1984), 'Households as Income-Pooling Units', in Joan Smith, Immanuel Wallerstein and Hans-Dieter Evers (eds), *Households and the World-Economy*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, pp. 37–55 at p. 46.
 - 13 See the case study by Ross, Robert and Trachte, Kent (1983), 'Global Cities and Global Classes. The Peripheralization of Labor in New York City', *Review*, **6** (3), Winter, pp. 393–431.
 - 14 Wallerstein, Immanuel (1979), 'Class Conflict in the Capitalist World-Economy', in idem, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 283–93 at p. 290.



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Chapter 13

The Historical Limit of Workers' Protest

Introduction

Most labour historians have long tacitly shared assumptions that are only now becoming subjects of discussion. For over a century, the building of serious theories of the working class and the workers' movement proceeded along two competing paths. One was the liberal tradition, which reconstructed the development of labour movements as the history of the civil emancipation – and consequently the integration – of the working class within capitalism. The other was the socialist approach (embracing both moderates and radicals) that interpreted labour history as a history of attempts to transcend capitalism.

When in the course of the twentieth century it became apparent that the efforts to abolish capitalism had produced entirely different results than anticipated (for example, the dictatorship in the Soviet Union), and that the working class in the highly developed countries was ceasing its pattern of rebellion, the first socialists who no longer expected the proletariat to evolve into a revolutionary subject spoke up.

This perspective was developed in some of Herbert Marcuse's writings.¹ It seemed to collapse when the workers in many places worldwide suddenly made a forceful comeback in the late 1960s. The fading of this wave of protest during the 1970s, the downfall of the movement of 1968 and, of course, the definitive end of the so-called socialist countries inspired new contemplation. In part, this reflection – along the lines of Marcuse – resulted in a quest for another subject – another social force that might bring about the good society.

This chapter focuses on a second approach – a perspective that is not the umpteenth proclamation of Marxism's 'death' but searches Marx's own work for clues to a different historical location of the working class and the labour movement. Its point of departure is the distinction between concrete and abstract labour,² which Marx uses to show that labour in general (to be performed in all social formations) acquires a specific form in capitalism that is both particular (the production of a certain useful commodity) and socially general, an abstract activity to be performed as a means of obtaining other commodities.

The labour movements and their theoreticians (social democrats, communists and others) have rarely, if ever, understood this particularity of labour in capitalism and have consistently interpreted the movement's activities in terms

of general, transhistoric labour. Even towards the late 1960s, Lucio Colletti had good reason to assert that 'not only Marx's critics, but indeed his own disciples and followers – and not only those of the Second International but also more recent ones, to this very day – have all shown themselves incapable of understanding or fully realizing the significance of this concept [that is, abstract labour]'.³ Given this background, the richly diverse cult of alienated labour repeatedly generated by the workers movement is hardly surprising.

Marx makes a rethinking of the workers movements and their transhistoric conceptualizations of labour possible because his theory contains a remarkable antinomy that has become apparent only recently due to the pressure of changed social and political relationships. Stefan Breuer was probably the first to address this matter. In *Krise der Revolutionstheorie* (1977), a critique of Herbert Marcuse's work, he identified two argumentative patterns in Marx, which he designated as the 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' Marx:

While – to maintain a distinction from the older Hegel interpretation – the 'esoteric' Marx revealed in a far more radical way than all other theoreticians the abstract-repressive nature of bourgeois socialization, which forcefully eliminated all non-corresponding modes of life, distribution and production . . . , the 'exoteric' Marx tended to revoke his insight that socialization of production within the capitalist mode of production can always only mean abstract socialization.⁴

To designate the proletariat as the driving force behind an upcoming revolution, Marx abandons his own critique of political economy. Rather than 'esoterically' regarding the working class as an expression, aspect or element of capitalism, he views this class as an external and hostile social group that is alien to capitalism — as an 'archimedean point . . . that forms the basis for critiquing the capitalist mode of production and of which the existence guaranteed the emergence of a new, truly human Subject'.⁵

The discovery of a 'different Marx' – which in Breuer's work coincides with the assertion that transcending capitalism has become impossible – also appears in Moishe Postone's writings. This American philosopher with pronounced German influences (in the 1970s he belonged to a group of Marxists in Frankfurt am Main who focused on the critique of the commodity logic)⁶ asserted that the 'other Marx' was actually the 'only Marx', and that the Marxists had continually misunderstood Marx thus far. In 1974 and 1978 Postone published major programmatic contributions,⁷ followed later by the monumental book *Time, Labor and Social Domination*.⁸

Here, Postone abandons what he calls 'traditional Marxism' (the line of the exoteric Marx) and elaborates on the esoteric Marx. Postone views traditional Marxism essentially as 'a critique of capitalism *from the standpoint of labor*', while 'a critique *of* labor in capitalism' is the issue.⁹ Traditional Marxism considers labour exclusively as a purposive social activity which is indispensable for the reproduction of human society – as 'the universal condition for the metabolic interaction [*Stoffwechsel*] between man and nature'.¹⁰ Such a transhistoric notion of 'labour' makes only labour's 'external' characteristics (availability, duration, intensity, remuneration, and so on) into objects of

political or economic contention.¹¹ By leaving the intrinsic labour processes aside, a transhistoric interpretation of technology is also implied: production techniques as such are neither good nor bad from a proletarian point of view; it is only that their application may or may not serve the interests of the immediate producers.¹² Thus, the traditional Marxist approach characterizes capitalism in terms of the mode of distribution alone and locates 'the system's fundamental contradiction between the modes of distribution and production'.¹³

Postone believes that this approach has had distinct merits:

The traditional position accords dignity to labor that is fragmented and alienated. It may very well be the case that such dignity, which is at the heart of classical working-class movements, has been important for workers' self-esteem and a powerful factor in the democratization and humanization of industrialized capitalist societies.¹⁴

Capitalism's essence (alienated labour) exceeds the scope of this perspective, since 'if labor is the standpoint of the critique, it is not and cannot be its object'.¹⁵ From the viewpoint of transhistoric labour the critique of capitalism remains positive: a specific aspect of the social formation (here, labour) provides the basis for critiquing a different aspect of the same social formation. Positive critique leads not to 'a critique of political economy but to a critical political economy'.¹⁶

Conversely, Postone aims to formulate a negative critique (that is, 'an imminent social critique with emancipatory intent'), a critique 'not undertaken on the basis of what is but of what could be, as a potential immanent to the existent society'.¹⁷ This negative critique is based on three ideas. First, Postone assumes that labour – though a necessary 'metabolic interaction between man and nature' in all societies – under capitalism differs fundamentally from labour in all other social formations. Capitalist labour (wage labour) not only gives rise to indispensable use values but also expresses abstract social interdependences. It is performed not to produce goods intended for personal consumption but to acquire an abstract medium (money) for appropriating other people's labour products.

Viewed from the perspective of society as a whole, the concrete labor of the individual is particular and is *part* of a qualitatively heterogeneous *whole*; as abstract labor, however, it is an individuated *moment* of a qualitatively homogeneous, general social mediation constituting a *social totality*. This duality of the concrete and the abstract characterizes the capitalist social formation.¹⁸

Second, Postone believes that capitalist labour's abstract character implies that intrinsic labour processes have changed (since their real subsumption): '*Industrial production is the materialization of capital* and, as such, is the materialization of *both* the forces and the relations of production in their dynamic interaction'.¹⁹ Production technology embodies alienation. The problem lies not in the application of the technology but in the technology itself.

Third, this perspective suggests that 'the overcoming of capitalism apparently involves a transformation not merely of the existing mode of

distribution but also of the mode of production'.²⁰ Postone quotes from the *Grundrisse*, in which Marx writes that the complete development of individuals requires 'labour in which a human being does what a thing could do has ceased'.²¹ And, he adds, 'Far from entailing the realization of the proletariat, overcoming capitalism involves the material *abolition* of proletarian labor. The emancipation of labor requires the emancipation from (alienated) labor.'²²

Postone uses these principles to conclude that the traditional labour movement is not an *anti-pole* of capitalism but rather an *expression* of this system. Marx describes the conflict between capitalist and worker as the conflict between the purchaser and the seller of a commodity, with an open outcome: 'There is here therefore an antinomy, of right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchange. Between equal rights, force decides.'²³ Class conflict is a conflict between commodity owners, between buyers and sellers, and thus operates squarely within the capitalist framework. Although 'a driving element' in the development of a commodity economy, it is also 'embedded in the social forms of the commodity and capital'.²⁴ 'Class conflict ... does not represent a disturbance in an otherwise harmonious system. On the contrary, it is inherent to a society constituted by the commodity as a totalizing and totalized form.'²⁵

The antagonism between worker and capitalist has no 'intrinsic dynamic' pointing beyond capitalism:²⁶

[Working-class social and political actions] and what is usually referred to as working-class consciousness, remain within the bounds of the capitalist social formation – and not necessarily because workers have been materially and spiritually corrupted, but because proletarian labor does not fundamentally contradict capital. ... However militant the actions and the forms of subjectivity associated with the proletariat asserting itself have been, though, they did not and do not point to the overcoming of capitalism. They represent capital-constituting, rather than capital-transcending, forms of action and consciousness.²⁷

Transcendence of capitalism would require a new type of movement.

[If] a movement, concerned with workers, were to point beyond capitalism, it would both have to defend workers' interests and have to participate in their transformation – for example, by calling into question the given structure of labor, not identifying people any longer in terms of that structure, and participating in rethinking those interests.²⁸

Overcoming capitalism, then, must also be understood in terms of 'the abolition of proletarian labor' and, hence, 'the proletariat'.²⁹

Since the mid-1980s, a group of independent German (post)Marxists has developed an analysis that resembles Postone's work in many respects, despite the virtual absence of references to his work. The group's intellectual output was published in a periodical originally called *Marxistische Kritik* and renamed *Krisis* in 1990. The group became more widely known when the renowned man of letters Hans Magnus Enzensberger published a study by Robert Kurz, the

collective's most influential thinker, in the monograph series he edits (the so-called 'Other Library').³⁰

Originally, the group defended the perspective of 'labour movement Marxism', although it tried to formulate a fundamental critique of the commodity economy from the outset.³¹ Gradually, the group radicalized its analysis and adopted the view that workers in their capacity as commodity owners (that is, as owners of labour power) constituted an integral part of that same commodity economy. In the course of 1989, the group accepted the consequences and concluded that the wage-earning class 'was simply the opposite side of the capital relationship'.³² This view was expressed in a text with the revealing title 'The class struggle fetish'. In this essay, the authors, referring to Marx's *Capital*, advocated theoretical relativization of the class struggle:

Marx's major work is not entitled *Class*, nor does it open with this category. Rather, it begins with the category of the commodity: 'The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an immense collection of commodities; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form. Our investigation therefore begins with the analysis of the commodity.' Instead, *Capital* ends with the systematic derivation of classes This positioning already reveals that in Marx's theory the classes are thus ultimately a secondary, derivative category. Traditional marxism in all its varieties has theoretically reversed this relationship. Here, class is the final basis of society rather than the commodity.³³

Unlike Postone, who claims that the 'mature' Marx unequivocally championed the esoteric perspective,³⁴ the *Krisis* group postulates that Marx was repeatedly torn between esoterism and exoterism until his death. This ambivalence is visible in Marx's views on the end of the capitalist society. In his major contribution to the critique of the political economy, he defended the position that the capitalist accumulation process set its own objective frontier or, as he wrote in Volume III of *Capital*, 'The *true barrier* to capitalist production is *capital itself*'.³⁵ In the long run, the advance of production technology would increasingly render human labour superfluous:

As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth . . . [the] *surplus labour of the mass* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis.³⁶

Here, the tendential *disappearance* of the working class marks capitalism's limit. At the same time, Marx firmly believed that the 'historical task' of the working class involved 'the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production and the final abolition of all classes'.³⁷

The 'double Marx' was an inevitable product of its day.³⁸ On the one hand, he focused on the incipient and promising workers' movement. On the other hand, he performed an abstract analysis of the emerging commodity economy's objective boundaries. The trends that Marx optimistically identified as symptoms of early agony were in fact merely growing pains.³⁹ The essential

error in judgement that led to the confusion of the exoteric and the esoteric perspectives was the idea that the labourers would never become more comfortable with the alienated relationships of the generalized commodity economy. Marx assumed that the owners of the commodity labour power would at no time become fully-fledged members of the community of free and equal commodity owners.

Peter Klein is the member of the *Krisis* group who has studied this aspect intensively. In his book *Die Illusion von 1917* (1992), he follows Marx and Pashukanis by concentrating on the voluntary relationship established between two independent commodity owners when they decide to exchange their commodities. Marx considered such a voluntary relationship the core of all thought about freedom and equality: 'the exchange of exchange values is the productive, real basis of all *equality* and *freedom*. As pure ideas they are merely the idealized expressions of this basis.'⁴⁰ Exchange is a great equalizer. If individuals A and B wish to do business because A supplies a commodity for which B is willing to pay, A and B will need to acknowledge one another as equal partners, as owners of private property, each with his or her own free will. Accordingly, freedom and equality are structural elements in exchange processes between commodity owners.⁴¹

Of course, an extended historical tradition of commodities exchange was necessary for the principles associated with exchange to become valid in their own right – first in philosophy and theology, then in legal circles, and eventually in politics:

With the rise of capitalism over the past two centuries, freedom and equality have finally become generally accepted in a manner that all people, when speaking about themselves as human beings, consistently associate humanity with these principles and place them in the context of the normative and legal framework based on these principles.⁴²

Including the workers in the community of equals – of people – required redefining private ownership. As long as the workers were considered propertyless, they did not count as fully-fledged citizens. The workers' movements attempted such a redefinition. From their perspective, wage-earners also owned property – namely, their labour power.⁴³ Emancipating the workers into 'fully-fledged' citizens was thus a political generalization of the commodity logic. The same holds true for women's emancipation, although *Krisis* has tended to overlook this aspect until lately.⁴⁴

The gender issue was neglected into the 1990s. In 1992, however, the group published a major document by Roswitha Scholz, presenting the so-called separation theorem. According to this theorem, commodification is possible only because of the simultaneous existence of social spheres that, while excluded from the commodification process, are inextricably linked with it. Individual private consumption is one such pivotal condition: it exceeds the scope of the commodity economy but is nevertheless indispensable. The production and distribution of commodities would lose their significance without consumption. Consumption is the necessary anti-pole – an essential Other – to the commodity.

Such separated 'spheres' (which include human care, consideration or eroticism) are ordinarily perceived as 'feminine', whereas the calculating, 'rational' world of commodities is viewed as 'masculine'. All efforts to emancipate women by applying 'masculine' standards (for example, by demanding wages for house-keeping work) therefore generalize the commodity logic.⁴⁵

According to *Krisis*, patriarchal capitalism is driven by one force alone – namely capital, the 'automatic subject'. The generalized commodity economy is basically subjectless – that is, 'the bearers of authority are not self-conscious subjects but act according to a historical frame of sociality constituted without any consciousness'.⁴⁶ Capital's objective tendency towards self-exhaustion can lead to a new society only if new subjects deliberately create themselves 'beyond the purely immanent "class struggle", along the crisis-ridden fault lines of commodified socialization'.⁴⁷

While Postone's contributions and the *Krisis* group may emphasize different aspects, their areas of resemblance are remarkable. The critique of the commodity logic establishes an original link between previously divided theory fragments, such as Lukács's analysis of the relation between commodification and class struggle, Adorno's remarks about the 'metaphysics of labour', Panzieri's insight into the capitalist nature of modern technology and Debord's critique of the spectacle.⁴⁸

The new theory seems compatible with historical experience: the workers' movement is the instrument for wage-earners to acquire fully-fledged citizenship within the commodity economy rather than a means towards abolishing that economy. Workers' protest radicalizes and becomes 'anti-capitalist' generally under conditions where capitalist *distribution* is not, or not yet, operative and the commodity economy does not 'deliver the goods'. The so-called socialist societies emerging from such anti-capitalist reversals were unable to escape the global logic of accumulation; they did not rise above the commodity economy but merely became its replacement.⁴⁹ Little wonder, therefore, that the workers' councils – the most radical political expression of workers' protest – never arose in consolidated parliamentary democracies and always rapidly turned into substitute parliaments.⁵⁰ Even the most radical unions – the revolutionary syndicalist ones – focused on changes in the distribution sector and were no match for the lure of advanced capitalism.⁵¹ According to Jean-Marie Vincent, the traditional workers' movement 'neither understood nor analysed in depth the sequence and inescapable logic' in the relationships specific to capitalist society. 'On the contrary', people believed they 'could separate the irrationality of the global methods of organization – in need of transformation – from a largely intangible daily and individual world'.⁵² In this light, the critique of the commodity logic enables us to rethink the historical significance of workers' movements. The result is a critical synthesis of the old liberal and socialist views. On the one hand, the liberal and socialist interpretations are both clearly based on a transhistoric conception of labour; on the other hand, the 'critique of the commodity logic' correlates with socialism in its fundamental criticism of capitalism (and even radicalizes this criticism by focusing on labour as such) and joins liberalism in viewing the workers' movement as an integral and necessary component of capitalist society.

Even if we accept this vision, objections and problems remain. Both Postone and *Krisis* make absolute the contrast between the standpoint of labour and the critique of labour. Chris Arthur has rightly postulated that this position might be misleading: 'In so far as labour grasps itself as the ground of its own oppression it undertakes a *self-critique*', and this could give rise to 'a *self-transcending* movement'.⁵³ While this possibility seems logical, it is equally conceivable that the 'crisis-ridden fault lines of commodified socialization' appear not in the labour sector but, for example, in consumption. At any rate, the critique of commodity logic suggests that social historians should double their efforts to investigate the appearance of such fault lines in the past and the role of workers in this process. One example of a topic that could be addressed is given in Eric Rothenbuhler's case study of the textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912. In the resulting 'liminal situation', the commodity logic began to lose its grip on people:

As long as workers strike about wages, they accept the myth of the labor market which gives meaning to their behavior within the industrial social structure. As soon as strikers behave as if not motivated by wages, their behavior cannot be made meaningful within the social structure and it becomes a threat to that structure.⁵⁴

Such 'liminal situations' are possible only because workers are *simultaneously* subjects and objects, commodities and commodity owners. Postone is somewhat aware of this fact but perceives no consequences for his analysis.⁵⁵ In a sense, this outlook typifies the approaches of most of the authors discussed here. As soon as abstract analysis needs to be linked with the 'surface' of concrete historical, social and political processes, Postone and the *Krisis* group tend to proclaim views not based on sound research but manifesting a sensitivity to the spirit of the times. In the early 1970s, when he first formulated the contours of the critique of the commodity logic, Postone described the working class as '*the not-yet-Subject* – that which constitutes the alienated Subject (Capital) and which becomes Subject by overthrowing capital and in the process abolishing that labor, essential to capital, which defines the proletariat itself'.⁵⁶ Two decades later, however, he views the proletariat as 'an integral element of capitalism rather than as the embodiment of its negation'.⁵⁷ This unsubstantiated shift in position lacks credibility. After all, even if the class struggle within capitalism is an antagonism rather than a contradiction, the continuing reconfirmation, maintenance and, where possible, expansion of proletarian emancipation is a prerequisite for transcending labour as such. In this respect, the 'old-fashioned workers' movement' – stripped of any illusion – still appears indispensable.

Notes

- 1 Marcuse, Herbert (1964), *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Boston: Beacon Press; idem (1965), 'Socialism in the Developed Countries', *International Socialist Journal*, 2 (8), pp. 141–51. Compare Mattick, Paul (1967), 'The Limits of Integration', in Kurt H. Wolff and Moore,

- Barrington, jr (eds), *The Critical Spirit. Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse*, Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 374–400.
- 2 Marx, Karl (1976), *Results of the Immediate Process of Production*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, in Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, trans. Ben Fowkes, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 992: 'labour must be broken down into its twofold form – on the one hand, into *concrete labour in the use-values of the commodity*, and on the other hand, into *socially necessary labour* as calculated in *exchange-value*.'
- 3 Colletti, Lucio (1972), 'Bernstein and the Marxism of the Second International' in idem, *From Rousseau to Lenin. Studies in Ideology and Society*, trans. John Merrington and Judith White, New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 45–108 at p. 79.
- 4 Breuer, Stefan (1977), *Krise der Revolutionstheorie. Negative Vergesellschaftung und Arbeitsmetaphysik bei Herbert Marcuse*, Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, p. 45.
- 5 Ibid., p. 49.
- 6 Postone's soulmates included Barbara Brick, Dan Diner, Helmut Reinicke and Peter Schmitt-Egner. See, for example, Reinicke Helmut (1974), *Ware und Dialektik*, Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand; Schmitt-Egner, Peter (1975), *Kolonialismus und Faschismus. Eine Studie zur historischen und begrifflichen Genesis faschistischer Bewusstseinsformen am deutschen Beispiel*, Giessen/Lollar: Verlag Andreas Achenbach; and Diner, Dan (1980), *Israel in Palestina. Über Tausch und Gewalt im vorderen Orient*, Königstein/Taunus: Athenäum.
- 7 Postone, Moishe and Reinicke, Helmut (1974–75), 'On Nicolaus "Introduction" to the *Grundrisse*', *Telos*, 22, pp. 130–48; Postone, Moishe (1978), 'Necessity, Labor, and Time', *Social Research*, 45, Winter, pp. 739–88.
- 8 Postone, Moishe (1993), *Time, Labor, and Social Domination. A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 5, 29, 277.
- 10 Marx, *Capital*, I, p. 290.
- 11 As early as 1976, Postone wrote: 'The ideas of the traditional working class movements, whether Social Democratic or Communist, arose at a time when the non-identical moment emerging out of capitalist society could not, even in its most militantly anti-capitalist form, encompass the idea of the *Aufhebung* of capitalist labor. Questions of ownership of means of production, of the mode of organization of *existing* labor, and of the distribution of capital and goods, could be placed on the agenda; not however the question of proletarian labor itself.' Postone, Moishe (1976), review of Helmut Reinicke's *Revolte im bürgerlichen Erbe. Gebrauchswert und Mikrologie*, Giessen/Lollar: Verlag Andreas Achenbach, in *Telos*, 29, Fall, pp. 239–45 at p. 244.
- 12 Among the many examples is Trotsky's ode to the conveyor belt, which is used in capitalism 'for higher and more perfected exploitation of the worker', but which may also serve very different purposes, as 'this use of the conveyor is connected with capitalism, not with the conveyor itself. . . . A socialist organization of the economy must endeavor to bring about a reduction in the physiological load on each individual worker . . . while safeguarding at the same time the coordination of the efforts of different workers. This will be the significance of the socialist conveyor as distinct from the capitalist one.' Trotsky, Leon (1973), 'Culture and Socialism' (1926) in idem, *Problems in Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture and Science*, New York: Pathfinder, pp. 241–42.
- 13 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 123.
- 14 Ibid., p. 71.
- 15 Ibid., p. 53.
- 16 Ibid., p. 69.
- 17 Ibid., p. 90.
- 18 Ibid., p. 152.
- 19 Ibid., p. 352.
- 20 Ibid., p. 23.

- 21 Marx, Karl (1973), *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 325.
- 22 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 33.
- 23 *Capital*, I, p. 344.
- 24 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 319.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 317.
- 26 'Whereas an antagonistic social form can be static, the notion of contradiction necessarily implies an intrinsic dynamic.' *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 371.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 371–72.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 371.
- 30 Kurz, Robert (1991), *Der Kollaps der Modernisierung. Vom Zusammenbruch des Kasernensozialismus zur Krise der Weltökonomie*, Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn.
- 31 See the crucial text of 1986, 'Die Krise des Tauscherts', *Marxistische Kritik*, 1.
- 32 Lohoff, Ernst (1989), 'Staatskonsum und Staatsbankrott', *Marxistische Kritik*, 6, pp. 42–84 at p. 48.
- 33 Kurz, Robert and Lohoff, Ernst (1989), 'Der Klassenkampf-Fetisch. Thesen zur Entmythologisierung des Marxismus', *Marxistische Kritik*, 7, August, pp. 10–41 at p. 10.
- 34 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 138.
- 35 Marx, Karl (1981), *Capital*, vol. III, trans. David Fernbach, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 358.
- 36 Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 705–706.
- 37 Marx, Karl (1976), 'Postface to the Second Edition', *Capital*, I, p. 98.
- 38 Kurz, Robert (1995), 'Der doppelte Marx', in Heinz Eidam and Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (eds), *Kritische Philosophie gesellschaftlicher Praxis. Auseinandersetzungen mit der Marxschen Theorie nach dem Zusammenbruch des Realsozialismus*, Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann; idem (1994), pp. 51–66; idem (1995), 'Fetisch Arbeit', in Helmut Fleischer (ed.), *Der Marxismus in seinem Zeitalter*, Leipzig: Reclam, pp. 162–84; idem (1995), 'Postmarxismus und Arbeitsfetisch. Zum historischen Widerspruch in der Marxschen Theorie', *Krisis*, 15, pp. 95–125.
- 39 Lohoff, Ernst (1991), 'Das Ende des Proletariats als Anfang der Revolution. Über den logischen Zusammenhang von Krisen- und Revolutionstheorie', *Krisis*, 10, January, pp. 74–116 at p. 83.
- 40 Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 245.
- 41 Pashukanis, Evgeny (1980), 'The General Theory of Law and Marxism' (originally 1924), in Piers Beirne and Robert Sharlet (eds), *Pashukanis: Selected Writings on Marxism and Law*, London: Academic Press, especially pp. 74–90.
- 42 Klein, Peter (1992), *Die Illusion von 1917. Die alte Arbeiterbewegung als Entwicklungshelferin der modernen Demokratie*, Bad Honnef: Horlemann, p. 29.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 51. This line of thought might lead to a reconsideration of the 'property in skill' often invoked in the past by artisans and skilled workers to legitimize their actions.
- 44 Other areas to be considered in this context are racism and colonialism. Did historical links exist between the commodity logic and the tendency (on the part of the bourgeois elite and large segments of the metropolitan labour movements) to look down on people from the colonies? *Krisis* did not address this issue. Nevertheless, a preliminary analysis appears in Schmitt-Egner, Peter (1976), 'Wertgesetz und Rassismus. Zur begrifflichen Genesis kolonialer und faschistischer Bewusstseinsformen', *Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Marxschen Theorie*, 8–9, pp. 350–404.

The radical implications of the critique of the commodity logic have to some extent escaped the attention of Eli Zaretsky; see his (1996), 'A Marx for Our Time? Moishe Postone's Reading of *Capital*', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 22 (2), pp. 109–15.

- 45 Scholz, Roswitha (1992), 'Der Wert ist der Mann', *Krisis*, 12, pp. 19–52. Also see Kurz, Robert, 'Geschlechtsfetischismus', *Ibid.*, pp. 117–68; and Scholz, Roswitha (2000), *Das Geschlecht des Kapitalismus. Feministische Theorien und die post-moderne Metamorphose des Patriarchats*, Bad Honnef: Horlemann, esp. pp. 107–21.
- 46 Scholz, 'Der Wert ist der Mann', p. 22; cf. Robert Kurz, 'Subjektlose Herrschaft', *Krisis*, 13, pp. 17–94.
- 47 Winkel, Udo (1995), 'Marx hat uns im voraus überholt. Rosa Luxemburg nach 75 Jahren', *Krisis*, 15, pp. 127–41 at p. 134.
- 48 Lukács, Georg (1971), *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, London: Merlin; Adorno, Theodor W. (1971), 'Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie. Drei Studien zu Hegel', *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp; Panzieri, Raniero (1994), 'Sull'uso capitalistico delle macchine nel neocapitalismo', in *ibid.*, *Spontaneità e organizzazione. Gli anni dei 'Quaderni rossi' 1959–1964*, ed. Stefano Merli, Pisa: Biblioteca Franco Serantini; Debord, Guy (1995), *Society of the Spectacle*, New York: Zone.
- 49 Both Postone and the *Krisis* group characterize the former Soviet-type societies as capitalist because of the dominance of abstract labour there. I consider this assumption all too easy. Earlier, I argued that competition for profit between capitals is essential for capitalism (see Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 650: 'Free competition is the real development of capital'; see also *Capital*, III, p. 127), and that such competition existed neither inside the Soviet Union between enterprises nor between the Soviet Union and Western capitalism. I favour regarding Soviet-type societies as non-capitalist (and, of course, non-socialist) modernization dictatorships and their competition with capitalism as state-centred. The labour processes remained mediated and abstract, given these relationships. van der Linden, Marcel (1992), *Von der Oktoberrevolution zur Perestroika. Der westliche Marxismus und die Sowjetunion*, Frankfurt am Main: Dipa Verlag, pp. 212–13, 227–45.
- 50 Cf. Perry Anderson's observation that 'all the examples of soviets or councils so far have emerged out of disintegrating autocracies (Russia, Hungary, Austria), defeated military regimes (Germany), ascendant or overturned fascist states (Spain, Portugal)'. Anderson, Perry (1980), *Arguments within English Marxism*, London: Verso, p. 196. On the parliamentarization of workers' councils, see Wohlforth, Tim (1981), 'Transition to the Transition', *New Left Review*, 130, pp. 67–81.
- 51 van der Linden, Marcel and Thorpe, Wayne (eds) (1990), *Revolutionary Syndicalism. An International Perspective*, Aldershot: Scolar Press; and Chapters 4 and 5 in this volume.
- 52 Vincent, Jean-Marie (1987), *Critique du travail*, Paris: PUF, p. 63.
- 53 Arthur, Chris (1994), review of Postone's *Time, Labor and Social Domination* in *Capital and Class*, 54, Autumn, pp. 150–53 at p. 151.
- 54 Rothenbuhler, Eric W. (1988), 'The Liminal Fight. Mass Strikes as Ritual and Interpretation', in Jeffrey C. Alexander (ed.), *Durkheimian Sociology. Cultural Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 66–89 at p. 73.
- 55 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, pp. 275–77.
- 56 Postone and Reinicke, 'On Nicolaus', p. 144.
- 57 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 389. Some members of the *Krisis* group go even further and assert that the old class struggle lacks any historical perspective, since proletarian emancipation is irreversible. Kurz and Lohoff, 'Der Klassenkampf fetisch', p. 36. This view is dangerous not only because irreversible attainments do not exist but also because of its classic Eurocentric vision pretending that metropolitan attainments automatically apply all over the world.



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Index

- Abendroth, Wolfgang 32, 45n47
 abortion 126
 Adorno, Theodor W. 211
 Adowa, Battle of (1896) 35
 Afghanistan 164
 Africa 3, 7, 130, 137n11, 143, 145, 157,
 163–65
 Allende, Salvador 145
 Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union
 Einheitsorganisation 50
 Allgemeiner Deutscher
 Gewerkschaftsbund
 (ADGB) 110n22
 All-Russian Confederation of Anarcho-
 Syndicalists 52
 Amalgamated Clothing Workers 144
 Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and
 Joiners 152n26
 Amalgamated Society of Engineers 17,
 152n26
 American Federation of Labor (AFL)
 12, 63, 64, 145, 151n19, 163,
 168n10, 174
 American Institute for Free Labor
 Development (AIFLD) 145
 Amnesty International 4
 anarchism 42n9, 180
 Anderson, Benedict 20n6
 Anderson, Perry 80n7, 116n90, 191n5,
 215n50
 Anglicanism 122
 Angola 121
Annales 1
 anti-militarism 42n9, 46n57
 Argentina 54, 59, 67n12, 75
 Buenos Aires 54, 55
 armed forces 5, 18, 23, 28–30, 33–36, 40,
 41n2, 42n9, 44n37, 45n48, 45n50,
 99, 161
 arms race 35, 40
 Archer, Julian P.W. 8n16
 Arrighi, Giovanni 117, 118, 166
 Arthur, Chris 212
 Arvidsson, Evert 65
 Asia 3, 4, 7, 126, 145, 162, 163, 165, 197
 Association of Indian Labour Historians
 3
 Australia 52, 75, 144, 145, 162, 174, 175,
 192n20
 Melbourne 166
 Austria 45n50, 86, 90n4, 96, 97, 104,
 112n34, 112n43, 113n53, 113n54,
 158, 164, 215n50
 Vienna 83n39
 Avanguardia Operaia 137n25
 Baade, Fritz 98
 Bakunin, Mikhail 4, 19, 149n6
 Barton, Allen H. 189
 Bebel, August 23
 Beccalli, Bianca 131
 Beckman, Earl L. 62
 Bédarida, François
 Belgium 14, 61, 62, 87, 90n4, 96, 97, 99,
 101, 110n14, 111n27, 113n54, 144,
 158
 Antwerp 155
 Brussels 83n39, 162
 Liège 98
 Bell, Daniel 83n33
 Benbow, William
 Bendix, Reinhart 32
 Berlin, Ira 1
 Birnbaum, Pierre 77, 89
 Bismarck, Otto von 39, 44n24
 Blair, Tony 115n84, 116n90
 Bloch, Marc 177, 190n5
 Blomberg, Eva 75, 76, 78
 Blum, Léon 114n62
 Böckler, Hans 160
 Bolshevism 23, 167n7
 Bonnell, Victoria E. 24
 Borchardt, Knut 111n33
 bourses du travail: *see* labour exchanges

- Braunthal, Julius 18
 Brazil 79, 121, 145
 Amazon 197
 Breuer, Stefan 206
 Brick, Barbara 213n6
 Briggs, Asa 1
 Britain 1, 2, 4, 6, 11–14, 16, 17, 20n8,
 21n15, 29–32, 34–36, 38, 40, 41,
 43n24, 44n26, 54–56, 58, 60, 61, 86,
 87, 90n4, 91n8, 96, 97, 100, 110n14,
 111n30, 113n52, 113n53, 118, 122,
 123, 125, 126, 128, 131, 132, 144,
 148, 158, 163, 175, 181, 182, 190n2,
 190n4, 192n20
 England 16, 29, 62, 87, 99, 136,
 194n51
 Birmingham 28
 Dagenham 131
 Hull 55
 Liverpool 18
 London 13–18, 50, 55, 83n39, 131,
 157, 163
 Manchester 17
 Sheffield 18, 28
 Wolverhampton 16
 Scotland 28, 29
 Edinburgh 17, 18
 Glasgow 18
 Wales 29
 British Guiana 145
 Brody, David 1
 Brüning, Heinrich 98
 Bull Sr., Edvard 89

 Camparini, Aurelia 92n17
 Canada 51, 63, 144–46, 156, 162, 166,
 175
 Canadian Labour Union Congress 12
 capital accumulation 5, 26, 99, 119, 120,
 180, 197
 capitalism 5, 6, 11, 16, 19, 25, 26, 29, 30,
 49–51, 62, 64–66, 76, 78, 87, 98,
 100–103, 109n12, 118, 120, 121,
 125, 126, 132, 136, 157, 159–62, 164,
 197–201, 205–12.
 Caribbean 163
 Casanova, Julián 83n39
 Casas del pueblo 104
 Caulfield, Norman 75

 causal configuration 23, 40, 178, 180,
 186
 Chaikovsky, Nikolai 149n6
 Charter of Amiens (1906) 51
 Chartists 141n78
 Chernyshevski, Nikolai 149n6
 Chile 52, 75, 86, 145
 Antofagasta 75
 Iquique 75
 Valparaíso 75
 China 4, 86, 164
 Christian Democracy 112n43
 Clinton, Bill 116n90
 clothing industry 15
 Cohen, Jean 135
 Cohen, Morris R. 179
 Cold War 40, 121
 collective bargaining 58, 61, 65, 128, 146,
 159, 161, 166
 colonialism 44n26, 91n10, 170n38,
 170n39, 214n44
 Columbia 121
 Comintern: *see* Communist
 International
 communication 5, 11, 17, 29, 86, 147,
 148
 Communist International (Comintern)
 51, 87, 89, 92n17, 144, 170n39
 Communist parties 5, 51, 84n46, 85–94,
 105, 116n91, 121, 125
 Communistischer Arbeiter-Bildungs-
 Verein 14
 community, imagined 20n6
 comparisons 3, 4, 95, 173–96
 contrasting comparisons 73, 176, 177,
 190
 incorporating comparisons 176–78,
 189
 testing comparisons 176, 178, 189, 190
 Confederación Nacional del Trabajo
 (CNT) 12, 50, 64, 72, 74, 76, 84n47
 Confédération Générale du Travail
 (CGT) 23, 50, 51, 55, 61, 63, 65, 72–
 74, 76, 88, 104, 105, 114n62, 128,
 132, 145, 164, 165, 170n46, 174
 Congress of Industrial Organizations
 (CIO) 168n10, 169n28
 Conlin, Joseph 74
 consumer cooperatives 100, 102

- consumption 26, 27, 40, 64, 99, 207, 210, 212
 contamination problem 176
 Conze, Werner 1
Corriere della Sera 127
 counterfactuals 196n76
 Cox, Robert W. 151n19
 Craxi, Bettino 97, 106
 Cronin, James E. 67n9
 Cuba 145
 Cunow, Heinrich 25
 Czechoslovakia 86
 Prague 117, 164

 Dahrendorf, Ralf 95
Daily Herald 60
 Davies, D.I. 169n33
 Debord, Guy 211
 decolonization 162
 De Leon, Daniel 144
 De Man, Henri (Hendrik) 99, 114n63
 Demau 126
 Denmark 87, 96, 97, 102, 103, 112n44, 113n52, 182, 190n4
 Copenhagen 158
 Deutsch, Karl W. 24
 diffusion 53, 62, 74, 144, 148, 175, 176
 Diner, Dan 215n6
 Disraeli, Benjamin 43n24
 Douglas, Paul H. 57
 Drachkovitch, Milorad M. 90n4
 drill 30, 34
 Dubofsky, Melvyn 56, 74, 78
 Duin, Pieter van 76
 Duma 23, 31, 33
 Duverger, Maurice 113n56

 Eder, Klaus 135
 education 5, 14, 18, 29–31, 35, 44n29, 44n38, 45n43, 57, 102, 121, 124, 127, 180
 Eisenberg, Christiane 194n51
 Ellis, Sylvia 124
 Engels, Friedrich 202n9
 environmentalism 103, 134, 135
 Enzensberger, Hans Magnus 208
 equivalence, conceptual 175
 Esping-Andersen, Gøsta 112n44
 ethnicity 2, 76, 143, 147

 European Community 131, 134, 165
 European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) 165, 166
 Event-Structure Analysis 196n77

 family history 7
 Fascism 110n18
 Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA IX) 63, 75
 Federación Obrera Regional Uruguayaya 52
 Fédération Jurassienne 19
 Federazione Lavoratori Metalmeccanic (FLM) 132
 feminism 103, 125–27, 130, 132, 133, 135
 Fenwick, Charles 158
 Fiat-Mirafiori 128
 Fimmen, Edo 159
 Finland 86, 109n11, 112n34
 Finlay, David J. 124
 First International: *see* International Working Men's Association
 France 1, 4, 8n16, 16, 17, 21n20, 26, 29, 31, 32, 34–36, 38, 40, 42n9, 42n16, 43n24, 44n26, 46n60, 50, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61, 62, 77, 86, 87, 90n6, 91n8, 97, 104, 111n30, 118, 119, 121–26, 131, 132, 136, 144, 145, 156, 158, 164, 181, 190n2
 Lyons 17
 Paris 4, 18, 51, 62, 83n39, 117, 144, 158, 189
 Tours 88
 Franco, Francisco 18, 52, 64, 79, 84n47, 104
 Fraternal Democrats 14
 Freeman, John 174
 Friedan, Betty 127
 Friedman, Gerald 76, 78

 Galenson, Walter 89, 152n38
 Gallie, Duncan 87, 119
 Gallin, Dan 156
 Galton, Francis 175
 Galton's problem 175, 192n20, 194n51
 General Commission of Trade Unions (Germany) 12

- Germany 1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 35, 36, 38–40, 43n22, 43n24, 44n26, 44n29, 44n31, 45n50, 50, 51, 54, 55, 59–61, 64, 72, 77, 79, 80n8, 86, 96, 97, 102, 104, 113n52, 113n53, 116n89, 118, 122–28, 130–32, 141n78, 156, 158, 160, 164, 173, 181, 190n4, 194n51, 215n50
 Bavaria 44n31
 Berlin 24, 83n39, 126, 131
 Essen 130
 Frankfurt am Main 130, 206
 Halle 88
 Hamburg 130, 131
 Munich 130
 Stuttgart 29, 158
 Württemberg 24, 44n31, 46n55
 Gervasoni, Marco 74
 Gestrich, Andreas 46n55
 Giddens, Anthony 72
 Giolitti, Giovanni 31, 60
 Goldman, Emma 4
 Goulart, João 145
 Gramsci, Antonio 145
 Greece 109n11
 Greenpeace 134
 Grenelle Agreement 123
 Griffin, Larry 9n20, 190n1
 Griffuelhes, Victor 42n16
 Growth, economic 11, 12, 18, 26, 99–101, 103, 105, 119, 120, 175
 Guatemala 156
 Gutman, Herbert 1
- Habermas, Jürgen 135
Hamburger Morgenpost 102
 Hanagan, Michael P. 58
 Hannan, Michael 174
 Hansen, Alvin 133
 Hansson, Per Albin 99
 Harman, Chris 133
 Hatzfeld, Henri 46n60
 Haug, Frigga 126
 Hemmer, Hans 129
 Herzen, Alexander 149n6
 Hildebrandt, Eckart 11
 Hirst, Paul 80n7
 Hitler, Adolf 98
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1, 7, 15, 18, 39, 57, 95
 Hungary 87, 215n50
 Budapest 83n39
 Hyman, Richard 123
- Iceland 109n11
 identity, phenomenal 175
 ideology 3, 50, 73, 75, 76, 87, 99, 100, 105, 121, 157–59, 162
 indentured labour 147
 Independent Order of Red Men 148, 152n41
 Independent Socialist Party (Germany):
 see Unabhängige
 Sozialdemokratische Partei
 Deutschlands
 India 164
 Indirect Method of Difference 185
 Indonesia 3, 86, 164, 175
Industrial Syndicalist 56
 Industrial Workers of the World 50–52, 56, 59, 61, 63–65, 72, 74–76, 78, 79, 144, 145, 150n17, 174
 Australia 52, 75, 145, 174
 Chile 52, 75, 145
 New Zealand 75, 145, 174
 South Africa 76, 83n31, 145
 United States 50–52, 56, 59, 61, 63–65, 72, 74–76, 78, 79, 144, 145, 150n17, 174
 industrialization 26, 44n29, 89
 inertia, institutional 61, 159, 169n19
 informal sector 166, 199
 initial solution 90n3
 integration 4, 5, 23–48, 64, 145, 147, 180, 205
 internal contracting 57, 69n26
 International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) 4, 155–71
 International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU) 164, 165;
 see also World Confederation of Labour
 International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) 159, 162–64, 170n38
 International Institute of Social History (IISH) 4, 8n15, 173

- International Labour Organization
 (ILO) 16, 148, 152n38, 156, 162,
 167n6, 167n7
 International labour standards 148, 156,
 166
 International Marxist Group 137n25
 International Secretariat of National
 Trade Union Centres (ISNTUC)
 158
International Socialist Review 51
 International Socialists 137n25
 International Trade Secretariats 157–59,
 168n17
 International Union of Food and Allied
 Workers' Association 156
 International Working Men's
 Association (First International) 4,
 5, 11–21, 50, 158
 International Working Men's
 Association (syndicalist) 74, 167n9
 internationalism 6, 11–14, 19, 20n6, 41,
 42n9, 51, 155–71
 Ireland 12, 109n11, 143
 Dublin 158
 Italy 4, 12, 13, 26, 28–32, 34–36, 38, 40,
 42n14, 44n26, 46n57, 54, 59, 60, 62–
 64, 69n19, 79, 97, 104, 106, 118,
 121–28, 131, 132, 145, 164, 181
 Apulia 54, 60, 69n19
 Emilia-Romagna 54
 Milan 127
 Pisa 127
 Porto Marghera 127
 Rome 83n39
 Sicily 46n57
 Turin 128
 Valdagno 127

 Jacoby, Sanford 57
 Jagan, Cheddi 145
 Jamaica 155, 156
 Japan 35, 87, 156
 Jasper, James M. 176, 193n26
 job control 15, 16, 55, 57, 75
 Joint Method 185
 Jones, Gareth Stedman 8n8
 Jospin, Lionel 115n84
 Jouhaux, Léon 51, 170n38

 Kautsky, Karl 110n19
 Kerr, Charles 51
 Kesselman, Mark 105
 Keynes, Milton 99, 110n23
 Keynesianism 111n24, 111n33, 113n54
 Social Keynesianism 99–101, 103, 107
 Kiernan, Victor G. 34, 83n39, 121
 Kitschelt, Herbert 100, 108
 Klein, Peter 210
 Knights of Labor 12, 19, 144, 145
 Kocka, Jürgen 2
 Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
 (KPD) 92n18
 Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
 (Maoist) 137n25
 Kommunistische Partei
 Deutschösterreichs 88
 Kommunistischer Bund (KB) 137n25
 Kommunistischer Bund
 Westdeutschlands (KBW) 137n25
 Kondratiev, Nikolai D. 66n9, 67n11
 Koselleck, Reinhart 13
 Kriegel, Annie 90n6
 Kurz, Robert 208
 Kurzer, Paulette 113n54

 Labour and Socialist International (LSI)
 162, 163
 labour aristocracy 88, 202n9
 labour exchanges 73, 81n12, 81n14, 104
 Labour Party 60, 95, 102, 103, 111n27,
 169n33, 176
 Lafferty, William M. 89
 Latin America 3, 7, 14, 137n11, 164
 Laurat, Lucien 88
 Lavrov, Piotr 149n6
 Lazarsfeld, Paul F. 189
 Lazitch, Branko 90n4
 Lazonick, William H. 58
 Legien, Carl 158
 legislation 13, 18, 25, 29, 37, 38, 43n24,
 118, 128, 131, 144
 Lenin, V.I. 202n9
 liberalism 6, 31, 77, 78, 95, 108, 111n30,
 121, 205, 211
 Liebersohn, Stanley 175
 Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire
 (LCR) 137n25
 Lipset, Seymour M. 89

- literacy 30, 39, 40
 Little, Frank 51
 Littler, Craig R. 58
 lobbying 135, 156, 157, 161
 Locke, Richard M. 191n16
 Lösche, Peter 116n89
 Löwenthal, Richard 64, 178
 Logue, John 11, 167n10, 168n12
 Lotta Continua 137n25
 Luebbert, Gregory M. 93n24, 111n30
 Lukács, György 211
 lumpenproletariat 200, 201
 Lutheranism 122
 Luxembourg 109n11, 165

 McDonald, David J. 155
 McInnes, Neil 91n14
 Maklakov, N.A. 38
 Malefakis, Edward E. 68n19
 Mandel, Ernest 67n9
 Marcuse, Herbert 205
 Marglin, Stephen A. 198
 Marx, Karl 4, 15, 19, 205–15
 Marxism 77, 99, 105, 111n27, 206, 209
 Marzotto 127
 masculinity 5, 75
 Masonic rituals 14, 148
 mass media 112n43
 Meillassoux, Claude 201
 Melucci, Alberto 135
 Menshevism 23
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 18
 Mess, H.A. 55
 Method of Agreement 183–86
 Method of Difference 183–86
 methodology 47n72, 186
 Mexico 44n24, 54, 64, 75, 145, 147, 166
 Michelin 127
 Middle East 4
 migration 3, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20n3, 35, 55,
 72, 75, 101, 129, 144, 147, 162, 163,
 170n41
 Mikkelsen, Flemming 58
 military service 5, 18, 33–35, 40, 45n49,
 46n55, 180
 Mill, John Stuart 57, 183, 185–87
 Mitterand, François 105
 Mommsen, Hans 176
Monde 126
 Montedison 127
 Montgomery, David 1
 monuments 18
 Moore jr, Barrington 191n5
 Moorhouse, H.F. 31
 Most Different Systems Design 185,
 186
 Most Similar Systems Design 185, 186
 Mouvement pour la Libération de
 l'Avortement et de la Contraception
 132
 Movimento de Liberazione della Donna
 126
 Mückenberger, Ulrich 197
 Müller, Hermann 98
 Mujeres Libres 76
 Mussolini, Benito 104
 mutual aid societies 38, 39, 175
 Myrdal, Gunnar 99

 Nagel, Ernest 179
 Napoléon III 44n24
 Naroll, Raoul 192n20
 National Association of Local
 Government Officers (NALGO)
 132
 national character 83n33
 National Confederation of Syndicalist
 Corporations 79
 National Socialism 52, 84n47, 98,
 110n23, 129
 National Union of Labor 12
 Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat (NAS)
 12, 59, 64, 65, 73
 nationalism 13, 18, 20n6, 39, 143, 155,
 163
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization
 (NATO) 161
 Netherlands 12, 55, 62, 64, 65, 86, 87, 96,
 97, 99, 101, 102, 111n27, 113n54,
 182
 Amsterdam 4, 55, 173, 190
 Rotterdam 155
 New Democratic Party 146
 New Zealand 75, 144, 145, 174
 Nigeria 3
 Nilson, Sten Sparre 60
 Noiriél, Gérard 73
 Norske Fagopposisjon 52

- North American Free Trade Agreement 166
 Norway 52, 60, 89, 96, 97, 111n24, 112n34, 112n42, 112n52, 145, 190n4
 Kristiania (Oslo) 54
Nouvel Observateur 126
 Nowak, Stefan

OBU Bulletin 63
 Offe, Claus 135
 Ogarev, Nikolai 149n6
 oil crisis 101
 Oneida community 141n78
 Organisation Communiste Internationaliste 137n25
 overdetermination 9n21, 181, 189

 Pakistan 3
 Panzieri, Raniero 211
 Paris Commune 4, 18, 144
 Parti Communiste Français (PCF) 90n6
 Parti Québécois 146
 Partito Socialista Italiana (PSI) 97, 104–107
 Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) 95, 104–7
 Pashukanis, Evgenij 210
 Pasture, Patrick 165
 PdUP-Manifesto 137n25
 peace movement 135, 141n78
 Perrot, Michelle 1
 Petras, James 105
 Philippines 145
 Phillips, Gordon 55
 Pigenet, Michel 74
 Pirelli 127
 Pirker, Theo 100
 Pizzorno, Alessandro 128
 planisme 105, 114n62
 Plurality of Causes 179, 185
 Poland 66, 164
 Warsaw 90n6
 Popular Front 105, 114n62
 populism 108
 Portugal 55, 64, 97, 107, 109n11, 145, 182, 215n50
 Alentejo 55
 Post, Ken 199

 Postone, Moishe 206–9, 212, 213n11, 215n49
 Profintern: *see* Red International of Trade Unions
 Przeworski, Adam 173, 185, 186, 195n62, 195n63
 Puerto Rico 145
 Purcell, A.A. 162, 170n38

 Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) 183, 186–88, 195n55

 racism 76, 157, 163, 214n44
 radicalization 53, 54, 61, 157
 Ragin, Charles 47n72, 180, 186, 188, 190n1, 196n70
 Railways 28, 56
 Rammstedt, Otthein 134
 Red International of Trade Unions (RITU) 157, 167n9
 Reichenbach, Hans 177
 Reichstag 23, 33
 Reinicke, Helmut 213n6
 Reuther, Walter 169n28
 revolution 29, 30, 53, 56, 62, 73, 79, 85–87, 117, 125, 177, 188, 206
 October Revolution (Russia) 29, 79, 85–87
 Révolution/OCT 137n25
 riots 35
 Ritter, Gerhard A. 38
 Rokkan, Stein 89, 93n23, 94n27, 177, 188
 Rosenberg, Hans 18
 Ross, Arthur M. 119, 136n5
 Roth, Guenther 40, 41
 Rothenbuhler, Eric 212
 Russia 4, 21n2, 23, 26–31, 33–36, 39–41, 44n26, 45n50, 46n56, 52, 54, 86, 87, 110n19, 181, 215n50; *see also* Soviet Union
 Kuzbas 144
 Moscow 51, 88, 144
 Petrograd 24, 69n25, 83n39, 144

 Sabel, Charles 198
 sabotage 76
 Sahlins, Marshall 75
 Sainsbury, Diane 102

- Sainte, François 98
 Salazar, António 52, 109n11
 Salerno, Salvatore 74
 Sänkiahö, Risto 95
 Sapelli, Giulio 107
 Sarekat Islam 86
 Sartori, Giovanni 193n41
 Scharpf, Fritz 103, 108
 Schmitt-Egner, Peter 213n6, 214n44
 Scholz, Roswitha 210
 Schöttler, Peter 73, 74
 Scoville, James G. 158
 Screpanti, Ernesto 54, 67n9, 67n11
 Second International 45n47, 144, 158, 206
 Section Française de l'Internationale
 Ouvrière (SFIO) 97, 104–6, 114n62
 self-employment 166, 197, 198, 200, 201
 separation theorem 210
 sewing machine 15
 sexuality 124, 126, 132
 sharecroppers 166
 shop stewards 118
 Shor, Francis 75, 76
 Šifrin, Alexander 87
 Simon, Herbert 189
 Sjöström, Gustav 60
 Skocpol, Theda 191n5
 slavery 197
 Snowden, Frank M. 63, 69n19
 Social Democracy 41n2, 42n9, 42n16, 43n22, 95–116
 social security 5, 36–39, 46n60, 161
 accident insurance 36, 37, 39, 46n59
 old-age insurance 37–39
 sickness insurance 36–38
 unemployment insurance 36, 37, 46n59, 65
 socialism 3, 59, 60, 71, 79, 88, 99, 100, 102, 106, 129, 157, 173, 211
 Socialist Party of Canada 51
 Solidarność 66, 79, 164
 Sombart, Werner 3
 Sorel, Georges 74
Sous du Soldat 23
 South Africa 3, 145, 157
 South Korea 3
 Soviet Union 2, 86–88, 98, 144, 164, 170n38, 205, 215n49; *see also* Russia
 Sozialistischer Deutscher
 Studentenbund (SDS) 128, 136n4
 Spain 12, 50, 52, 55, 64, 69n19, 72, 76, 79, 83n39, 95, 97, 104, 105, 106, 107, 180, 215n50
 Andalusia 55, 180
 Barcelona 83n39
 Bilbao 83n39
 Catalonia 12, 180
 Madrid 83n39
 Stearns, Peter 63
 Steenson, Gary 60
 Stein, Lorenz von 190n2
 Stinchcombe, Arthur 85
 Stretton, Hugh 176
 strike funds 71, 77
 strikes 3, 16, 23, 24, 27, 36, 43n20, 53, 54, 56, 61–63, 67n10, 68n19, 71, 72, 77, 88, 119, 122, 123, 126, 131, 133, 174, 175, 179, 186, 187, 189, 212
 student movements 118, 124–30, 133
 students 120, 121, 124–30, 133, 138n35
 Sturmthal, Adolf 161
 suffrage 5, 18, 31, 32, 40, 45n46, 97, 180
 women's suffrage 45n46, 110n14
 Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation
 (SAC) 64, 65
 Sweden 5, 12, 52, 55, 60, 62, 64, 65, 76, 78, 87, 89, 95–99, 100, 102, 103, 111n24, 112n34, 113n53, 113n54, 182, 190n4
 Switzerland 19, 86, 96, 97, 99, 110n14, 112n38, 156, 158
 Geneva 17
 Zurich 157
 syndicalism 42n16, 49–84
 trilemma 5, 8n19, 65, 78
 Syndicalist Commission (Belgium) 12
Syndicalist Railwayman 56
Syndikalisten 60
 Tarnow, Fritz 98
 Tarrow, Sidney 127, 128, 133
 taxes 5, 35, 40, 101, 105
 Taylor, Andrew 102
 Tet Offensive 117
 Teune, Henri 185, 195n62, 195n63
 Thatcher, Margaret 95
 Thelen, Kathleen 191n16

- Therborn, Göran 31, 90, 122
 Thiers, Louis Adolphe 18
 Thompson, Edward P. 1, 80n7
 Thorpe, Wayne 5, 66n1, 71, 72, 76, 77
 Tilly, Charles 133, 140n69, 181
 Tobback, Louis 101
 Tolain, Henri 17
 Tönnies, Ferdinand 20n6
 trade union density 123, 165
 trade unions 18, 42n9, 50, 51, 60, 67n11, 71, 91n8, 124, 129, 131, 158, 159, 165, 166
 Trades Union Congress (TUC) 12, 18, 123, 131, 139n49, 163, 169n33
 Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) 139n49
 transportation 5, 28, 56, 147
 travel money: *see* viaticum
 Trotsky, Lev 213n12
 Trotskyism 125

 Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (USPD) 88
 unemployment 46n60, 55, 97–99, 102, 123, 198, 200
 Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) 12, 104, 107
 Union Nationale des Etudiants Français (UNEF) 136n4
 Unione delle Donne (UDI) 136n4
 Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI) 63
 United States 1, 3, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15, 25, 50, 54, 56–59, 63, 64, 77, 83n39, 99, 111n24, 124, 127, 128, 140n68, 143–53, 156, 162, 163, 166, 173, 181, 182, 190n4
 California 197
 Lawrence, MA 212
 San Francisco 55
 United States Agency for International Development (USAID) 145
 United Steelworkers of America 155
 Uruguay 52

 Van Biezen, Ingrid 106, 115n80
 Venezuela 156
 viaticum 158
Vie Ouvrière 61
 Vietnam 118, 121, 164

 Vincent, Jean-Marie 211
 Visser, Jelle 165
 Volunteer Force 34
Vrije Volk 102

 wages 17, 26, 27, 54, 58, 68n12, 105, 108, 118, 129, 132, 144, 146, 147, 156–58, 199, 200, 211, 212
 Wallerstein, Immanuel 191n5, 201
 war 5, 18, 23–25, 27, 30, 31, 34–36, 40, 41, 51–54, 57–62, 75, 87, 96, 97, 99, 101, 121, 129, 135, 143–45, 157, 158, 162–64
 Civil War (Spain) 83n39
 Civil War (USA) 144
 Crimean War 35
 Russian-Japanese War 35
 World War I 23, 25, 27, 30, 35, 36, 40, 45n47, 51–54, 57–59, 62, 67n11, 75, 96, 97, 145, 158, 162, 170n41
 World War II 5, 99, 111n33, 121, 129, 143, 145, 163, 164, 168n10, 190n4
 war enthusiasm 24, 41
 watchmakers 19
 Weber, Eugen 28
 Weber, Max 189
 Wehler, Hans-Ulrich 2
 Weiler, Peter 163
 Weimar Republic 129
 Western Federation of Miners 63
 White, Joseph 74
 Whiteside, Noel 55
 Wiardi Beckman, H.B. 62
 Wolter, L. 61
 women 5, 15, 30, 60, 73, 75, 92n17, 101, 117, 118, 121, 122, 126, 127, 130–33, 166, 199, 211
 women's history 8n9
 women's movements 117, 121, 125–27, 131–33, 137n26, 139n49
 workers 13–17, 19, 24–28, 30, 31, 34–39, 41, 49, 50, 53–63, 65, 66, 71–79, 87–89, 96–100, 107, 108, 118, 119, 121, 124, 127–33, 139n46, 139n48, 139n49, 144–46, 148, 155, 157, 158, 161–63, 166, 174, 178, 179, 198, 205, 206, 208–12
 agricultural workers 54, 55, 68n19, 79
 bricklayers 21n15

- bronze workers 17
- building workers 16, 17, 54, 55, 60, 62, 72, 88
- cabinet makers 21n15
- casual workers 55, 57, 161
- cigar makers 146
- coopers 146
- dockers 54, 55, 72, 155, 157
- factory workers 56, 73
- gasworkers 16, 54, 55, 68n17
- glass workers 19, 144, 190n4
- grape gatherers 55
- harvest workers 55
- metal workers 28, 57, 69n25, 79, 88, 128
- miners 56, 60, 63, 73, 76, 155, 156, 158
- moulders 146
- printers 146, 158
- project workers 56, 72
- railway workers 56, 73, 146
- sailors 75, 144, 145
- shoemakers 21n15
- silk spinners 17
- tailors 21n15
- textile workers 28, 163
- turners 17
- white-collar workers 38
- workers' councils 211, 215n50
- Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP) 137n25
- works councils 118, 119
- World Confederation of Labour (WCL) 165, 167, 171n57; *see also* International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
- world exhibition (London 1851) 15
- World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) 164, 168n10, 170n46
- Woytinski, Vladimir 98
- xenophobia 13
- youth movements 117, 118, 120, 122, 124–30, 133
- Yugoslavia 87
- Zaretsky, Eli 214n44
- Zeitlin, Jonathan 198